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*LIFE IN SOUTH FLORIDA*



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# ORANGES AND ALLIGATORS:

Sketches of South Florida Life.



# ORANGES AND ALLIGATORS:

*Sketches of South Florida Life.*

BY

IZA DUFFUS HARDY,

AUTHOR OF "BETWEEN TWO OCEANS," ETC.

*SECOND EDITION.*

LONDON :

WARD AND DOWNEY,

12 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

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# ORANGES AND ALLIGATORS:

## *Sketches of South Florida Life.*

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### CHAPTER I.


Two Sides of the Shield—December Sunshine—Guavas  
and Grape-fruit—Our Winter Paradise—The British  
Colony—Our Compatriots and their Doings.

“FLORIDA is the best lied-about State in the Union!” observed a Northern tourist who had spent some few days in the State.

There was a good deal of truth in the remark, albeit his opinion was founded on so brief an experience. Others, after many months, have come to the very same

conclusion. Florida has been much misrepresented for good and ill. It is equally unsafe to rely on the reports of the enthusiasts who portray it as an earthly Paradise, smiling in eternal sunshine, in which storms and frosts are unknown, and on whose fair and fruitful groves the blighting breath of winter never falls, as to judge it by the accounts of its enemies, who describe it as an unhealthy, barren wilderness of arid sand and pestilential swamp, the home of alligators and rattlesnakes, mosquitoes and malaria.

The glib pen of the advertising agent, in his glowing descriptions of the terrestrial Eden, whereof, through his kind offices, you may become the happy possessor of a share, exaggerates on the one side, as much as the disappointed settler, misled in his




brilliant expectations, and returning home disgusted, is apt to exaggerate on the other.

Poor Florida suffers alike from the onslaughts of its enemies, and the eulogies of its indiscreet friends. Strike the balance between the views of these two parties, and you come somewhere near the truth about this State, which has its good and bad qualities mixed and blended, like the average human being, who is neither angel nor devil—although if he be a politician his fellow-creatures will have it that he is one or the other, and nothing between! If Florida, with all its irresistible and undefinable charm, is no “Tom Tiddler’s Ground,” whereon to “go picking up gold and silver!” as it is pictured by some sanguine imaginations—neither is it, in

spite of all the drawbacks and difficulties of life in the newly-settled portions of the State, the hopeless land of failure which it is pronounced by some of the disappointed.

In the following leaves from my notebook in South Florida—day by day jottings, scribbled on the spot—I can at least claim that the lights are not heightened, the shadows not deepened; they are just bare and simple sketches of the real, not the ideal, Florida, as it appeared to me in “the level of every day’s most quiet life.”

It is not yet ten o’clock, on a December morning, and already the landscape is flooded with the golden light and warmth of an English June. We are all sitting out upon the piazza on the southern side of the house. Before us stretches a sun-



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burnt, thirsty-looking lawn, more brown than green, dotted with orange trees—sleek, glossy, full-foliaged orange trees, all starred with their ruddy golden fruit globes, beneath the burthen of which their heavy branches bend. Those of our party who take any thought for their complexions are armed with parasols, and sheltered by broad hats, even their hands protected by garden gloves, from the burning sun which blazes in a sky of dazzling blue. A gentle breeze just stirs the feathery crowns of the tall, straight, yellow pine trees, which border the lawn between us and a lake which is as blue and clear as a fragment slipped from the shining sky. Very different are these light, airy, graceful “yellow pines” of the South from their darker, statelier brethren, whose sombre ranks shadow the

aisles of the great forests of the North and West.

We are lying about in lounging chairs, with novels and newspapers on our laps. The young men of the household—(in various morning costumes, shooting-coats, riding-boots, and hats of every conceivable shape, size, and style save and except the “chimney-pot,” beloved of the Briton, which we have left many a thousand miles away)—are enjoying their ease as indolently as we are. One of us musters energy to observe that guavas would be good just now—ripe fresh guavas. Who will go and pick them? They don’t all speak at once; but presently the youngest and meekest of the party obediently, if reluctantly, gathers himself up out of his sheltered reclining chair, and goes forth into

the blazing sunshine to pluck us guavas. He presently brings a basketful; and they are good indeed! warm and glowing with the sun's kisses—they seem saturated with the very scent and savour of the sun—as we cut through the smooth rind into the luscious pink and creamy pulp.

Close to us is a tree bowed down with heavy clusters of "grape-fruit," a variety of the "forbidden-fruit," which looks like an enormous pale yellow orange, and tastes like something between an orange and a lemon, with a peculiar pleasant tartness of flavour all its own. A delicious wine is made from it; and it is excellent eaten with sugar—as those of our little circle who prefer its sharp subacid flavour to the more insipid sweetness of the guavas

are eating it now. And it grows so near the piazza that it is more attainable than the guavas, which grow far in another grove—and this southern sunshine makes even the youngest and strongest of us lazy!

The long shadows of the orange trees reach towards us; for the sun, although it already burns like a flame, is still far from the zenith. And yet when we rose at half-past six this morning we found a light frost chilling the air; we clustered round the stove to warm ourselves; and before breakfast some of us had hastened down to the lake side to see if the young bananas had sustained any damage from the frost. These our cherished bananas look at present like dead dry sticks stuck in the sand at the water's edge: but from the top of each

stick a long, slender, green bud is springing. The suckers were planted out about a fortnight ago, and will bear fruit, if fortune favours them, late next summer. Happily the tender shoots have taken no harm this night. If they had the loss would not have been ruinous, as they only cost 10 cents apiece.

Neither are the tomatoes one penny the worse.

This, our host explains, is the advantage of lake protection. The cold air is tempered in passing over the water; and delicate plants, such as the banana, set out along the southern border of a lake, will escape with impunity from the effects of a chilly night, which will bring ruin on a plantation further off

from the shore, and exposed defenceless to the north wind. It is needless to say that the larger the body of water, the further its protective influences extend. Florida, fortunately, abounds in water; and this Orange County being a perfect network of lakes, affords ample opportunity for the shelter of the tenderest plants, although it is not below the frost line—as we find to our cost, having left all our furs and winter wraps behind us in New York, under the delusion that here we should find a tropical winter climate.

Instead of our ideal winter paradise we find—Southern noons indeed, but Northern nights—nights for thick blankets and a cosy little bed-room fire, mornings for a cheery blaze of pine-logs on the open hearth, even days when a sweeping

“norther,” driving the grey storm-clouds before it, chases us all indoors; then—for the climate is changeful as April smiles—other days that are pure tropical sunshine from dawn to dark. This is our first taste of a Florida winter, with all its incongruities. Burning in the sun and shivering in the shade!—frost and fire! and live lemons and oranges and guavas “all a-blowing and a-growing” in golden glory on the trees!

With all the semi-tropical aspect of this outlook, there are many hours in the evening indoors, when the closed blinds shut out the view, and the pine-log fire crackles merrily on the parlour hearth, when it is difficult to realise that we are in far South Florida, or, indeed, in America at all! so completely do we find ourselves surrounded

by our compatriots. We hear only the familiar accents of our own country—English voices, English faces, are all about us. We almost forget that we are under another flag than our own “Union Jack,” that over us the Stars and Stripes, the

“Flag of Freedom and Union, waves!”

Every train and steamer from the north bears hither its English party. Some come to this “sunland of the palm and pine” for pleasure, some for health; some—and these the majority—come bent on making here the fortune they have failed to win in the Old World.

The pleasure-seekers treat Florida as a tourist-ground, make the regular “Cook’s Tour” of the State, and return. The health-seekers settle for the winter, to

escape the frosts and snows of their northern homes; as a rule they speedily reap their harvest of restored appetite, reddening cheeks, and returning strength in this pure, fresh, life-giving atmosphere, and return generally with health and strength renewed—unless, indeed, they come too late, as so many do, when consumption already has fixed its grip upon them. The fortune-seekers may be roughly divided into two classes—those who have capital, and seek here a good investment for it; and those who have none, or next to none, and have come here to work their way.

In our winter home we find both classes largely represented.

The former invest in orange-groves in full bearing; the purchase is expensive, but the profits are almost certain. Setting

aside the risks—which are but slight—of loss by frost, accident, or disease, an orange-grove is a source of sure profit, and steadily increases in value year by year. An average of a thousand to fifteen hundred oranges per tree may be reasonably hoped for from a good grove of twelve years old and upwards; and the transport of Florida oranges to the northern markets, in cars specially constructed for the safe keeping of the fruit, is a regular and increasing business. Thus those who can purchase a ten or twelve year-old grove generally find their money well invested. But these are the aristocrats and capitalists of the little company who for a brief season have pitched their tents on the shores of these fair lakes. Here also are others, a whole party of them—Englishmen all, and

young—some fresh from college, all full of hope and life, and vigour, and energy, all crowded out of the close ranks of the battle for bread in the Old Land, who have brought their strong muscles and their willing hearts—and not much else—to work their way here. And these, if they would achieve success, must not only work hard but wait long for the golden crop they hope to gather from the orange-groves.

• They must buy “wild land” covered thickly with pine-wood, and probably with a heavy undergrowth of palmetto “scrub”; and as the cost of hired labour is high here, they usually have to undertake themselves the task of “clearing” it—burning or chopping down the trees, and cutting away the brushwood with their own hands.

Hard work for some of these “curled

darlings," fresh from luxurious English homes!

To-day they are sharing our *dolce-far-niente* life here, lounging in the shade of the piazza, smoking, swinging in hammocks, eating guavas. But this will not last long. Soon each one of these young fellows will be toiling hard at the rough work of an outdoor labourer, and earning by the sweat of his brow his daily bread—or rather his daily-biscuit, for bread, as we know it, fine white wheaten bread, is one of the luxuries which settlers in a pioneer state must not expect. One handsome boy of twenty or so has been working in the carpenter's shed, and has made himself a cot-bedstead, a table, and a three-legged stool. With these and a portable stove he starts in life to-morrow in his own hut, in the one "cleared" corner

of his own "grove" that is to be. Two others are only waiting till they can hire a couple of negroes and buy a horse, to ride over to their newly-acquired fifty acres of wild wood. Another is going to "camp out" on his modest ten acres.

Thus, one by one, they pass from us into the wilderness.

Looking round upon them, gathered together here to-day, so soon to be scattered far and wide, they seem a gallant and goodly company, in the flower of their young, stalwart, sanguine manhood. There is something sad in the thought that our overcrowded old land has "no room" for sons like these!

But they have brought with them

loyalty enough and to spare for Queen and country. The latest batch of arrivals, dutifully attending the little Episcopal church on Sunday, came home with feelings unreasonably aggrieved, because for the first time in their lives they had heard the blessing of Heaven invoked upon the head of "the President of the United States" instead of "the Queen and all the Royal Family."

"It did not seem natural," said these staunch young Britons, ever true to their flag.

There was no place for them at home—they were amongst the many who are "crowded out" of the close-serried ranks of the "Old Countrie!" But there is room here—room for the willing hand to work, room for the strong heart to hope,

---

room for wealth to find a new and promising field, and room for youth and vigour and energy to spend themselves in building up homes—like, yet unlike the dear, far-off homes of England—amongst the golden orange-groves.

## CHAPTER II.

All among the Orange Groves—Hammock Land—Florida  
Driving—A New Sensation—Our Sportsmen—Our  
Daily Bread.

HERE on the shores of Lake Maitland, in the heart of the great "Orange Belt" of Florida, the chief topic of interest is of course the orange—its culture, its varieties, the choice and purchase of land for planting, profits to be expected, &c. The majority of the settlers here live on their groves and by their groves; and these respective groves are the chief show-sights of the neighbourhood—at least, we

have as yet been taken to see nothing else. We are driven out to see Smith's grove, which is a model; and then to see Brown's grove, which is a warning; and then to see Robinson's, Jones's, and on no account allowed to omit a visit of admiration to Johnson's.

The groves, most of them, look at first very much alike to our unpractised eyes. Although the orange, taken by itself, is one of the most beautiful of trees, with its smooth, glossy, deep green leaves and golden fruit, yet when this same tree comes to be planted out in interminable straight rows at monotonously regular distances, in a plain of barren-looking, dead-white sand, it does not present an especially picturesque aspect. We have learnt to admire those orange trees which are

carefully trimmed and trained in the most approved form, a straight stem with its crown of abundant foliage pruned into a solid, almost globular, mass. It has a tendency to shoot out lower branches and double stems, which rebellious inclination it is the aim of the devoted orange cultivator, who is proud of the symmetry of his grove, to correct.

If the monotonous, level, rectangular ranks of the orange groves are wanting in picturesqueness, the "hammock land" more than supplies the element they lack. There is not much hammock around us here; there is plenty of "pine land," more or less wild; many finely cultivated groves, in all stages, from "seedling" babyhood, to "full bearing" maturity; and here and there some low-lying grass

land, drowned in marsh water ; but " good productive land," they tell me, " if only it were drained "—a very large " if," I think, as I look at the stagnant glassy-green pools !


The " hammock," or dense jungle growth, is the most picturesque part of the landscape in Florida ; it is also the richest and most fertile soil ; but it is dear to buy and hard to clear, its clearance costing from three to ten times as much as that of pine land ; and when cleared, although wonderfully productive soil, it is generally held to be undesirable on the score of health. On this point, however, opinions seem to differ widely. " Unhealthy ? not a bit of it ! " pronounces the owner of one splendid grove. " Look at this ! " indicating with a sweep of his

hand the flourishing trees, and the pretty, picturesque, piazza'd, and balconied home in their midst—"This is hammock land; it cost me a hundred dollars and more an acre to clear, and I gave two hundred an acre for it. And you wouldn't find a healthier place! I've never had a day's sickness here. And as to richness of the soil—why, just look at those trees! I tell you hammock land's worth its price."

One of our friends—a staunch and enthusiastic advocate of "pine land"—demurs to this. "Hammock's rich," he admits, "but it exhausts itself. In the course of a few seasons it will need fertilising. Rich to begin with, but it doesn't last. The roots suck up the goodness out of the soil, and then you'll have to fertilise!"

It is, I think, generally admitted that the malaria fiend, who leaves the high rolling pine lands unmolested, haunts the lovely thickets and picturesque swamps of the "hammock," especially the lower-lying hammock lands.

There is a bit of hammock land near here, through which a good driving road is cut. It would be hard to find a scene surpassing for pure tropical beauty this forest of cypress, oak, and magnolia trees, crowding together and running wild in rank luxuriance, all matted with curling and creeping vines, their roots buried in a thick and impassable tangle of palmetto scrub, their branches wreathed and smothered in the clinging veils of grey Spanish moss—the curious and characteristic "hanging moss" of the



South, that variously suggests the drooping of venerable grey beards or the waving of funeral draperies.

Here and there a tall palmetto tree rises, solitary and stately, and seems somehow to hold itself aloof and apart from the intertwined, interlacing thicket below. The sun is setting as we drive through these woods; a soft and mellow roseate haze flows from the lurid west and floods all the landscape. The swift semi-tropical twilight closes fast upon us; it was daylight but now! and now the night has fallen, like a sudden curtain of shadow dropped upon the land.

There is something strangely weird and melancholy in the aspect of the moss-wreathed forest as the shadows close. The trails of hanging moss droop like

mourning banners down dim cathedral aisles. Down in the deep shadows of the dense woods, we could fancy those dusky veils wreathed and half hid the fatal forms of the Erl King's daughters.


This is only one of several beautiful drives in the neighbourhood of Maitland. The roads are all deep loose sand, very heavy for the horses, although smooth and pleasant for the drivers, were it not for the blowing sand that on dry breezy days peppers our faces and gets into our mouths and eyes. A short cut is a new sensation here, as we simply turn off the road and drive straight through the woods, crashing through the under-growth, dashing over fallen trunks, charging standing stumps, leaping "over bush and over briar," and at every lurch

and bound of the buggy feeling that we have only escaped running a tilt against one tree to be hurled into collision with the next. However, somehow the short cut generally proves successful, and we arrive at the goal none the worse except for being considerably shaken up.

The buggy is the universal vehicle here, varied occasionally by the "Macy waggon," a light, strong, springless waggon with a movable spring seat, very well suited for these heavy sand-roads, as also is the buggy, with its spidery wheels, which rolls along swift and light through the sand, and dashes through the woods, making nothing of leaping light as a bird over a fallen tree. We have sought in vain for chaise or brougham, or victoria; it is a buggy or a Macy waggon or nothing. If

driving here is delightful—and, take it for all in all, even with the drawbacks of sand and stumps, delightful it is—I cannot say as much for walking. There are no pavements nor hard roads; you must plough your way through the heavy sand, and after a walk of a few hundred yards have the pleasure of picking a few scores of “sand-burrs,” sharp as needles and adhesive as glue, from your skirts.

The young men of the party often go out shooting. Some appear contented with the sport that is to be got here, others very much the reverse. One returns grumbling from a morning’s “sport” during which he has only got a couple of miserable little quail; another has brought home for our supper a dozen fine pigeons—they *will* call them “doves”



here, which takes away my appetite. A third has "potted" an alligator, about five feet long, in our own lake; and on a more distant shore he has slain an aldermanic turtle, which, it being too large to bring home, he has had to leave on the bank where it met its fate. With visions of *soup* in our minds' eyes, we all in chorus reproach him with his laziness, and he returns to the scene to seek the turtle—but it has disappeared, and is probably furnishing a meal for a "cracker," or for a negro family.

The young men bathe in our lake before breakfast every morning. I should have imagined that the vision of the dead alligator's avenging family, surviving it and bent on dark revenge, would have spoilt their morning ablution, but it does

not appear to affect their enjoyment of it in the slightest degree. One day, when the butcher failed to bring us our daily beef, our alligator-slayer sallied forth and shot a sand-crane, and we had him—the crane—roasted for dinner. He was an excellent bird, excellent alike in quantity—which was fortunate, as he was our “little all” in the way of meat for dinner that day—and in quality, having a flavour of something between pheasant and turkey. We shall not be reduced to sand-crane again, however, as the head of the family has just made arrangements for a regular supply of Chicago beef from the North, so our daily dinner will have travelled 1,500 miles; and by way of variety of meat we have venison. A hunter has just come in from the woods with his cart

full of deer. He has been out four days, and has got sixteen head of deer; he has sold the hides and antlers of the bucks, and offers us saddles and haunches of venison at 15 cents a pound. This means that we shall have venison steak for breakfast and roast venison for dinner for the next few days. We have plenty of fish, game and poultry always; but mutton and lamb are conspicuous by their absence, and milk—except the Swiss condensed milk—is a luxury rarely to be obtained.


### CHAPTER III.

Two Authorities on Orange Culture—Opposite Sides—An  
Orange Bower—Pioneer Life—"Wait for the Waggon!"  
—The New-comer's Ordeal—Balm in Gilead.

THE morning sun blazes like a golden flame in a sapphire sky. Three enthusiastic orange growers are making the round of a large and successful grove. Two horses tied to a stump are meditatively munching their bits. One novice in the school of orange culture plods meekly through the heavy sand with the three experts, and respectfully lays to heart their experiences and theories.

The first thing she notes is that their opinions differ on sundry points of evident importance. Who shall decide when doctors disagree? The owner of the grove has *his* theory; one of the visitors has *his*; the other visitor very sensibly suggests that either theory will work well if carried out consistently, but that if you hope for success you must not start a grove on Mr. A.'s principles and then shift your treatment of it according to Mr. B.'s lights.

Mr. A.'s theory is probably excellent when reduced to practice, for his grove is certainly a model of beauty, order, and symmetry. His trees, large and splendid, deep and dark and glossy of foliage, weighed down with their golden burthen, are planted thirty-three feet apart. He himself thinks this too much: if he started another grove he would



set out his plants at intervals of twenty-five feet, which gives about seventy-two trees to the acre ; but here Mr. B. and he are entirely at issue. One talks of "crowding the roots," the other of the "roots spreading, and the strength of the tree running to waste." Mr. A. has "girdled" his trees—*i.e.*, cut a ring round the bark near the ground, thus checking the flow of the outer sap, and forcing the strength of the tree to run to fruit instead of to wood. He says this operation has largely increased his crop ; but Mr. B. strongly disapproves of the process. As to the number of oranges which may reasonably be expected from a tree, there is a difference of opinion again. One estimates a thousand oranges per tree in a successful grove of mature trees ; another more sanguinely counts

upon an average of fifteen hundred from each full bearing tree in its prime.

I cut these two paragraphs from a local paper :—" We note two remarkable trees in Mr. A.'s grove, both of which are less than nine years old, yet will yield fully sixteen hundred oranges each."

And the following :—

"From one tree, sixteen miles east of Tampa, there were gathered eleven thousand six hundred and forty-three oranges by actual count, the largest yield ever known from a single tree."

To return to Mr. A.'s grove : it is fifteen years old ; his finest and largest trees are the seedlings sown at the starting of the grove fifteen years ago. He points out to us that the "budded" trees are much smaller than the seedling trees, though


they seem equally prolific, and bear fruit several years earlier. We visit one after another the biggest trees, all of them raised from the seed, and all situated near the house in the centre of the grove, their development being in part owing to this proximity, as they have received more care from the family, been more liberally fertilised, and have been additionally favoured by discreet doses of soapsuds administered to their roots. Arriving at the finest tree of all, Mr. A.'s special pride, we all four stood—and half a dozen more could have joined our party—in the arbour formed by its richly laden branches, which, arching high above our heads, bent down beneath their weight of fruit, and swept the very ground, forming a perfect orange bower. We measured the trunk, and found

it thirty-three inches in circumference, about six inches or eight inches above the ground. From this fifteen-years-old tree its owner expected to gather two thousand oranges.

Having diminished his prospective crop by partaking, not too thriftily, of the rich juicy fruit, we passed on to a tree of "crimson" or "bijou tangerines," almost double the size of any tangerines I ever saw in Covent Garden Market, and then to a tree of "yellow" or "willow-leaf" tangerines — both these varieties known as "kid-glove oranges," from the ease with which one can pull the "sections" apart, and eat them without soiling a light glove. Our host pressed us in vain to pronounce as to the respective merits of the "crimson" and the "yellow"; we found them both alike delicious. Mr. A.

expects to get \$8 a box for these, selling his ordinary oranges at \$2 a box; but of course this price is very far indeed from representing clear profit. Mr. B. has just cleared a small grove of his at a profit of only ten cents per box; still, when the boxes are counted by hundreds, even such a profit is not altogether to be despised.

After the tangerines we were able to manage a few guavas, though Mr. A. did not especially recommend these; he said they were out of season. The guava is more delicate and difficult to rear than the orange; this very morning, after passing orange grove after orange grove, ruddily and richly golden with its crop of ripe fruit, we came upon a number of guava trees completely blighted and ruined by the recent frost. The orange tree is hardier




and more vigorous also than the lemon. It requires ample fertilising; if the soil be not rich enough the leaves will have a yellowish hue, instead of the deep glossy green which is their proper colour.

Now, as seedling oranges do not generally bear anything of a crop until eight or nine years old—though budded trees come into bearing two or three years earlier—it is evident that the purchaser or planter of a young grove cannot live by oranges alone, for his young trees will bear none for years, and during those years he must either have capital to support himself, or he must make a living in some other way. He may keep poultry and raise market vegetables, for which there is a large demand; he may go out to work for his neighbours; he may, if he likes neither of these alternatives,

live frugally on a mere pittance. He will build his own wooden cottage ; he can make his own few articles of furniture ; he can almost always shoot his own dinner, and catch some fish for his supper ; for a trifling cost he can lay in a stock of necessary groceries, sacks of flour and hominy, &c.


As for the luxuries of life, he will simply do without them. And he can do without them very well, if I may judge by the bronzed, hearty, healthy-looking young fellows, high-booted, broad-hatted, with their cheery English voices and jovial laughs, who ride over—sometimes on half-broken Texan ponies—from their respective “places,” many a mile away, to spend a social hour here, and report their progress for the benefit and encouragement of those



who have not yet "settled." This one a year or two ago was a doctor in London, this an artist, that a barrister. Presumably, patients did not flock to the one, nor picture-dealers to the second, nor briefs to the third; for here they all are, deep in the study of orange-culture, except one, who is sensibly planting out tomatoes and cabbages, which will bring him in quicker if more modest returns.

These young pioneers seem on the whole to enjoy the new life, and find an appetising flavour in bread of their own baking, and game of their own shooting and cooking.

They are always sure of the freshness of their fish, as they catch it themselves; and their hard work supplies the best of sauce to the meal. Butcher's meat, I fancy, they rarely see except when they ride over to




dine with us. One laughed as he told us how he had imprudently started in life without any kerosene, relying upon log-fires, and for the first two days and nights it poured with rain, so that all his wood got wet, and being half a dozen miles from his nearest neighbour, he could neither buy, beg, borrow, nor even steal, a dinner.

Other young settlers there are, who prefer finding some occupation in the towns to the camping-out life of the woods. Here on the piazza, for instance, a young Englishman, who has been dining here, sits enjoying his pipe of peace—his rest after the day's labour. He reports himself as getting on well, and satisfied with his prospects. He has invested all his capital in a young grove, and while his grove is growing he finds his occupation in driving a waggon. He

hauls lumber, carts furniture, baggage, and indeed conveys anything and everything that his waggon can carry. Only a season or two ago, clad in the "purple and fine linen" of civilisation, he was talking "Shakespeare and the musical glasses" in West-End drawing-rooms. Now he looks just as happy here, as he cracks his whip and drives his waggon full of any load he may be employed to cart.

Florida has certainly two advantages over our own colonies—it is much nearer to England than Australia, New Zealand, or the Cape, and the settler here has not to dread the bitter hard winter of Canada. If Florida does not suit him, less than half the time that it would take him to return from the Antipodean colonies will



see him back in old England. And if he elects to stay and settle here, his trials will not be from inclement weather, from winter cold, nor even from summer heat, as the thermometer here does not as a rule range higher, nay, not even so high, in summer as in the northern cities of the United States.

New York has hotter days and nights now and then than any in the South. The breezes blowing across from the Atlantic and the Gulf keep Florida comparatively cool—cooler far than one would expect from its latitude. But the insects in summer must be a trial hard to bear, though some localities are much freer from the pest than others. For instance, we have not as yet even seen a mosquito once this winter herè (near Maitland), but we hear

from those who have come up from about fifty miles further south that they left mosquitoes swarming there even now, in midwinter—a cheerful summer prospect for the new settlers in that neighbourhood! for the mosquito dearly loves a fresh and tender new-comer, and, having feasted right royally upon the victim for the season, will let him alone and pass on to the next new arrival. By way of comfort for such sufferers I would remind them that mosquito bites are regarded as a preventive of fever by many people who have had a large experience of life in tropical climates.

“Yes,” says a traveller who has spent several years in Florida; “that’s true. Once I camped out with half a dozen other fellows, and I was the only one who didn’t

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smother myself in mosquito netting. The others all had veils, and gloves, and their heads done up in bags at night. They didn't get bitten, while I was all but eaten alive ; you'd have thought I had small-pox to look at me ! But they all got the fever one after another—and I was the only man that escaped. I always say to new-comers —‘ You just let the mosquitoes have their way ; it will maybe save you from something worse.’ ”

## CHAPTER IV.

We learn what we can do without—*Dolce far Niente*—On the Borders of the Backwoods—"The Killing"—A Warm Welcome—The Hangman's Knot—The V. C.

WE are getting used to South Florida life. We talk glibly of pine-land and bay-land, of high and low hammock, and "flat-woods," of town-lots and groves, of budded trees and seedlings; we have found out how excellently well we can dispense with such luxuries as fresh milk and mutton-chops; we have learnt how little the leaking of a boat, the periodical baling it out with a tin pail, and the


immediate neighbourhood of alligators, detract from the enjoyment of rowing on the lake. We enjoy driving through the pine forest, leaping over stumps and shaving trees, and regard it as a natural, if not even necessary, incident of the drive for the traces to slip off the splinterbar, and the harness in divers ways to unravel and disintegrate itself—a matter of the less astonishment, as South Florida harness appears to our insular eyes to consist chiefly of a rope and a hook, and an old strap flung over the horse's back in a casual kind of way. We have discovered that side-walks and pavements are amongst those superstitions of civilisation which may be easily dispensed with, and that “whene’er we take our walks abroad” the railway-line is an admirable path, smoother and more

comfortable than the sandy road, for a "constitutional." The first charm of novelty has worn off the amusement of picking lemons and oranges, grape-fruit, and citrons, from the trees within a few yards of the piazza. We lounge and dream through the winter days—if these *are* winter days, that look and feel like balmy spring!

It is an Arcadian sort of life—at least to us who have come here merely for change and rest and health, and are heaping up

"Large measure well pressed out!"

of that for which we have come. To us Sybarites, who repose on the rose-leaves of this dreamy *dolce-far-niente* existence of the South, and feel no pricks from the thorns of the hardships of the frontier



struggle but a little way from us, the time goes by like an idyl of poetic peace. But now and then there come to us echoes and glimpses from the life outside and around, which remind us that we are on the borders of the backwoods, in a pioneer State, developing and progressing fast, but in the early stages of settlement as yet. Only a few years ago these South Florida forests were untouched wilderness, the haunt only of cattle-men, Indians, and a few hardy adventurers.

Florida is one of the most peaceful and law-abiding of the States. Considering its area and population there is a remarkably small proportion of crime to blot its fair record; and in regions where there are no police, no officers to administer the law, the settlers as a rule administer it

excellently well for themselves. Occasionally it happens that even in places where the law of the land is in active operation, the citizens manifest an inclination to assist its "strong arm" by taking its work out of its hand.

One day in Orlando, the county town of Orange County, a police-officer was shot and killed on the spot by a coloured bartender. On the instant the town was in an uproar; the streets swarmed with armed men, surging in excited throngs from every quarter. The police ran the murderer into gaol only just in time to save him from the hands of the indignant crowd.

"The killing"—as they call it here—took place in the afternoon; and long before the evening closed, printed handbills were in circulation all over the town

“earnestly entreating” the “Citizens of Orlando” to “take no rash action” on this occasion, but to leave the matter in the hands of the authorities, and promising them that justice should be done, that the murderer should be brought to trial that very week.

This appeal, assisted by the influence of an armed guard drawn up round the gaol, proved efficacious.

The very next day there was similar trouble in Kissimee, some eighteen or twenty miles South of Orlando on the South Florida line.

There two policemen were shot by negroes, whereon the citizens of Kissimee arose, raided the coloured quarter, fired several houses, and drove out a large number—it is to be presumed and hoped

only such members as were deemed objectionable and disorderly—of the coloured population ; or, as a witness, in describing it to us, tersely put it, they “went through Nigger town and ran out the niggers.”

The expelled negroes thereupon took the train for Orlando. Kissimee telegraphed the news to her sister city (Orlando), and when the train arrived at the depot of the latter town, a deputation of the citizens of Orlando were there ready to meet it. They met it with levelled revolvers. To quote one of our friends, a fellow countryman, who happened to be on the spot, “It was a sight to see those Orlando fellows, with their teeth set and faces white with rage, seizing the black fellows by the collar and pushing them back on the cars,

with, 'Go back, you brutes! we'll have none of you here!'"

It is not necessary to add that in the face of this warm welcome not a negro alighted; and the train went on, leaving the satisfied citizens to disperse in peace. Where the negroes got off I never heard, but supposed they alighted by instalments at the various wayside stations.

We were told that there had never yet been an execution in Orlando, and I quote from the *Orange County Reporter*, the chief paper of the neighbourhood, the following frank expression of opinion on the "law's delays" in special reference to the present "troubles:"

"It is plain that the desperadoes have lost all respect for law and its representatives. It is idle to claim that the

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delays of the law have not emboldened ruffians and cost good men their lives. Justice which is so tardy that scoundrels are led to believe that they can outrun it is not justice, although clad in the garb of legality. Forbearance is commendable, and the order-loving citizens of Orange County have shown a degree of forbearance which is almost phenomenal. But the bonds of peace will bear no further strain. Court is now in session. The gaol is full of criminals about whose guilt there can be no doubt. We have reason to believe that if these cases are not speedily disposed of by the courts, the criminals will be disposed of by men whose loyalty to justice cannot be questioned, but who feel that the highest law known to man is the protection of himself and family."

“If the gaol is not emptied of its occupants through the legal channels, and that speedily, we do not believe that Orange County will have any gaol, nor need of one for the next few years! We do not counsel rashness, and would deplore any such condition. But there is a deep and strong feeling pervading this community which has already commenced to crystallise, and will find vent in strong action if prompt steps are not taken.”

I thought the editorial counsel against rashness was neatly conceived in the spirit of

“Don’t put him under the pump!”

Notwithstanding the “sentiment of the community,” the convicted murderers live, and “appeal” from trial to trial; and the

gaol continues full—the gaol which looks like a pretty, light, wooden summer cottage, its general aspect so bright and cheerful, that it is hard to realise that those inmates sitting at the barred windows, looking out across the little flower-garden and enjoying the sunshine, are convicted murderers under sentence of death.

One morning we are lounging in a harmonious and international group on the piazza—nationalities being distributed in the proportion usual at our winter home—viz. half a dozen English, one Irish, and one American, all allied in the friendliest and most intimate *entente cordiale*! If the races only agreed half as fraternally as their individual representatives do, what a blissful world of peace and concord it would be!

Having nothing better to do, we have resorted to the mild diversion of making the "hangman's knot." Our American friend being somewhat slow at this, I suggest laughingly, as he fumbles with the cord, that "his hand is out of practice; it must be a long time since he has officiated at an execution!" He responds, simply and seriously, that it is indeed many years since he hung nine men, or at least took the prominent part in the business of putting the rope round their necks. "We greased it with tallow to make it run easy. We always do that!" he observes in tones of meditative reminiscence as he fingers the rope; and it occurs to us now, as he goes back—with a gentle dreamy retrospection that might have befitted a love story instead

of a death-tragedy—into details of that occasion, that there is a grim deftness after all in the way he twists the knot.

In answer to an inquiry, as to what were the legitimate officials of the law doing? he replies with a slow satisfied smile: "We'd got the sheriff and all his *posse* locked up, you see. We'd taken this fellow from the sheriff; we were nearly three thousand strong that day! And when we asked him, 'Why did you kill that woman and that little innocent child?' and he answered 'For fun!' why, then you'd ought to have heard the howl that went up from those three thousand—'Hang him *for fun!*' Well, that was one of the nine. The other eight were just as bad. And don't you think I'm *glad* to-day to

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recollect the hand I took in that business?"

We have met in the course of our travels in the South and West many a man who in his day had taken a part in the "Vigilance Committees," those "Extra-Judicial Organisations" which—acting on the doctrine that in certain emergencies "morality submits to a suspension of her own rules in favour of her own principles"—deliberately violated and publicly defied the law, succeeded in doing stern justice where the law had failed, in conflicts with the law itself came off victorious, and, notably in the case of the celebrated "*V.C.*" of the early days of San Francisco, were the salvation of their city. But never yet have we seen or heard of a member of these committees

who regarded their course as anything but a public duty, or looked back to his own share in their work with anything but pride.

## CHAPTER V.

The "Cold Wave"—British Growlers—Frozen Florida—  
The Silver Lining—Florida Luck and Pluck—True to  
their Faith—Lemons and Lemon-culture—Florida Land  
—Quality and Cost.

"Out of the north wind grief came forth."

NEVER was this Swinburnian line more aptly illustrated than early in this New Year,\* when the "cold wave" swept down from the cruel north upon Florida, and proved, to the dissatisfaction of everybody, that there is no such thing as a "frost line" here, or if there is, the frost

[\* In January, 1886.]

line is about three inches below the ground.

“ A cold wave coming ! ” was telegraphed down to Florida from the Washington Weather Bureau. We, sitting out on the piazza, rocking in the sunshine, heard this forecast with indifference, enjoying a pleasant refreshing coolness in the balmy air. But with sundown the pleasant coolness became a biting chill. Down from the cruel north the icy wave of wind pressed on, and we who had come here to bask perforce remained to freeze. The convalescents began to cough again ; the healthy people sneezed ; we all shivered ; and being almost all from our side of the ocean we enjoyed the relief of heartfelt British grumbles and growls, as the mercury fluctuated

between two and twelve degrees of frost.

Even the Americans were heard—not to grumble ! but to yearn for the furnace-heated rooms of their Northern homes. Rarely indeed is a grumble heard from the true American, (who as a rule patiently endures not only “ what can’t be cured,” but also what *could*, if he only would uplift his voice !) It was unanimously voted too cold to go to church, although the little Episcopal Church was only a stone’s throw distant, and Bishop Whipple of Minnesota kindly consented to hold service in our large parlour. These Southern houses are not built for cold weather, and morning after morning we huddled round the blazing log fire to thaw our numbed fingers

before breakfast, and hoped for better things as the sun rose higher in the bright and clear blue sky—for even freezing Florida was sunny Florida still. Evening after evening we invoked maledictions—of graduated strength and varied energy according to our sex and temper—upon the damp wood in our little bedroom stoves, and we recklessly borrowed the kerosene can and poured its contents on the refractory logs to make a little blaze. And night after night the frost fiend had his will and his way.

The oranges were frozen stiff on the trees. It was a sorry sight to see the wilted, yellow, drooping leaves, which but a few days before were fresh and crisp and glossy green. The lemon trees withered under the winter's blighting

breath till they looked like wisps of hay. Our poor bananas are all deader than the lamented last rose of summer. The ground beneath our orange trees is carpeted with fallen leaves, all brown and shrivelled, and "drops" of fruit swept from the limp stems. Lemons, grapefruit, and citrons—those splendid citrons as big as pumpkins which were the pride of our hearts—all lie fallen and frozen on the sand. The delicate guavas, which die at a breath of frost, are ruined to the roots; but the oranges—hardiest of the citrus fruits—have suffered less than the other trees.


Now the cold wave has done its work and passed, and Sunny Florida is herself again. Once more we are basking in the

golden warmth of a tropical noon—once more we spend our days lotos-eating in the soft and balmy breezes. Once more we are sitting out of doors in our summer dresses until midnight, in the mellow radiance of the glorious moonlight of the South. We are all happy again, but still the yellow, withered-up trees are a mournful spectacle to see; the glowing sun breathes no life nor colour into the blighted leaves and ruined fruit. The mischief is worked; what's done cannot be undone.

So much for the dark side of the picture. Now for the silver lining to the cloud. No grove-owner to whom I have spoken has "bated one jot of heart or hope" because of the reverses of this season. "Florida luck and pluck against Jack Frost," they say. The first comfort is that

such a "cold snap" has not been known for fifty years—not since 1835. Florida has gone on and prospered for half a century without such an evil day, and may go on now for another half century without a recurrence. Then, a part of the crop—it is uncertain as yet how large a proportion—may still be saved; and even in those groves which have suffered the most, wherein the season's fruit is lost, the leaves wilted and shed, and the seedlings ruined, the stout and strong trees have, it is hoped and believed, sustained no permanent damage.


The trees have been "seasoned" by previous cold weather, the sap driven down from the branches to the roots, so that the frost did not seize them unprepared. Had this "cold wave" happened, by evil chance, a



month or so later, when the sap will be full and high in the trees, the loss would have been incalculably greater. As things are—"No sap fooling about in our upper branches," as one settler triumphantly observed—the power of the frost has been restricted, and but few of the mature trees have "split." Some which to all appearance were ruined, with shrivelled leaves and spoilt fruit, prove on examination—a slight incision being made in the bark—to be healthy and live wood still. Then, say the undaunted grove-owners, the value of these oranges which are saved from the wreck will be largely increased, as will the value of the undamaged groves. Further, this severe ordeal is an important test, to show exactly what the orange tree will endure. The lemons, with the ex-

ception of the Villafranca variety, which has proved itself as hardy as the orange, are in sad case.

It is difficult, nay, almost impossible, to realise as yet the exact amount of damage that is really done. Oranges that have been frozen and thawed are eatable, and may taste good for to-day, but the cells of the pulp have been broken; they quickly grow soft and flabby, and will not stand transportation. Spoilt for shipping, they are good for nothing but to eat, and we are all doing our best to eat them up as fast as we can. We have just had a basket of oranges from Apopka—some twelve or fifteen miles off—and more splendid fruit I never tasted, though they were gathered since the frost. The groves there, I am told, show little or no sign of injury.



Those trees which shed their leaves are not in the worst plight ; the young leaves will push when the old leaves have fallen ; those which keep their yellowed leaves shrivelling on the stems are in the worst case. There is of course great loss all through the State, as this season's crop (which in most cases was just ready for gathering and shipping), is, according to locality, either a total, or, at the best, a partial failure ; but even those prospective purchasers who have not yet chosen their lands show no symptoms of wavering in their plans because of this season's evil fortune. It is one of the risks of such investments—a stroke of ill luck not likely to recur for many seasons. He who “believes in oranges” waves still the banner of a firm and unshaken faith. He who has

built his trust upon tomatoes, undismayed by the loss of his winter crop, emulates the Bruce's historic spider, sets to work and plants more tomatoes for the spring. Even he who has attached his hopes to the lemon, the fair and fragile, delicate lemon, seems in no way discouraged. He still stoutly avers that "lemons are the thing," but I fancy he will do well to plant his lemons a little further south than even here in this sunny "orange belt."

The lemon, although but little attention is as yet paid to its culture in Florida, compared to that bestowed on the orange, is probably destined to become a very important and profitable product there. Although it will not flourish as far up in the Northern portion of the State as

the orange, succumbing sooner to cold, and thus running greater risk during the winter, it has certain advantages over its sister-fruit, the orange. It does not need quite such rich soil; it begins to bear fruit earlier, and bears larger crops; I have heard it said that a good lemon-tree will bear five thousand in its tenth year.

The Florida lemons are very fine and well-flavoured; they bear handling and transportation well; and a lemon-grove would be one of the most highly desirable properties if it were not for the hazard of a frost. But there are some varieties hardier than others—the robust “Villa-franca” for instance; and of course as you go South the risk of frost diminishes. The best rule for those contemplating the planting of a lemon-grove is to


go as far South as possible, assuring themselves of course that the land they choose is a suitable soil.

Florida land is almost everywhere "patchy and scrappy," the valuable and the worthless lying side by side. In the course of a morning's drive, we pass through richest of hammock and most worthless of "scrub"—through the wild wet tangle of vivid green "bay-land," valuable for the natural fertiliser, the "black muck," which may be had for the shovelling out of it—through pine-land high and low, good, bad, and indifferent, covered with trees of all sizes and conditions, from the lank weedy things with trunks frail as pipe-stems, to the noble monarchs of the forest with their ample girth and stately crowns.

The size of the trees is the best guarantee for the quality of the soil. The land that produces only poor thin lanky trees will grow only poor crops, and *vice versa*.

The white soil of even the best pine-land, when we first saw it cleared and planted in grove form, looked, to our unaccustomed eyes, like barren desert sand. But in this unpromising-looking white sand the orange-tree thrives. The sandy soil of Florida is not by any means so poor as it looks. Scratch its bleached, colourless surface, and you come upon a darker, richer layer an inch beneath.

The pine-lands are of varying degrees of richness; that on which the pine woods are mixed with a growth of hickory is reputed the best. Next to this in richness stands the land of pine trees mixed with



various kinds of oak—turkey-oak and the “black-jack,” with its russet-tinted foliage, that contrasts so picturesquely with the tender dainty green of the sapling pines.

The orange will flourish in a variety of soils, “high hammock” and “high pine” being the best for it, and all wet land its enemy. It is ruin to the roots to strike water; and low damp “flat woods,” and all land with a subsoil of quicksand, should be especially avoided.

The cost of land in Florida covers of course a very wide range, according to location and quality. It may be had at all prices from a dollar and a quarter to a thousand dollars an acre; but it may be safely said that nothing *worth having* can now be had at a dollar and a quarter, nor for

a good deal more! I was once offered a "bargain," in the shape of forty acres of good medium pine-land, (with a front on a lake, answering to the euphonious name of "Red Bug") for three hundred dollars. It tempted me even more than a bargain in "dry-goods" would have done—but I let my chance slip. A site to which I took an especial fancy on the shore of the loveliest of little lakes, bordered with splendid pine-trees, was not to be got under two hundred dollars the acre.

Here are a few sample "lots" and prices, picked at random from a catalogue of one of the "Real Estate Agents," who are as the sands on the sea-shore in Florida.

"5-acre grove; 350 trees, budded, five years from the bud; quarter mile from railway depot.—1,800 *dollars*."

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"60 acres, 10 hammock, remainder pine ; 6 acres cleared ; 150 bearing trees ; 1,000 nursery trees ; lake-front ; 10 miles from Orlando.—5,000 *dollars*."

"40 acres, lake-front ; 12 hammock, rest fine pine ; 10 acres cleared ; 250 bearing trees ; 50,000 oranges on the trees ; 3 miles from Apopka City.—8,000 *dollars*."

"40 acres best pine-land ; lake-front ; 2,000 trees, 1,500 bearing ; good house and garden ; guavas, pine-apples, etc.  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from Maitland.—30,000 *dollars*."

## CHAPTER VI.

After the Ordeal—The Sarasota Business—Snakes and Swamps—A Mighty Hunter—The Alligator as a Domestic Pet—A Negro Wedding—The Vicissitudes of a Velvet Coat.

As the days run out into weeks since the great "cold wave," we realise more and more the compensations which help to offset the sad amount of loss and damage undeniably occasioned by the almost unprecedented ordeal of the frost that for the first time for fifty years has swept clear down to Tampa. Reports from the various counties are still coming in, and few or none are anything but hopeful. We can

see with our own eyes, young nursery-trees, only planted out about ten days before the frost, which have come out of the frosty trial quite uninjured, having had the advantage of lake-protection, which in this land of lakes is so easily obtained.

We are more and more convinced that the orange-growers, in at least the Southern regions of Florida, have no reason to be, and are not, discouraged, while the traffic in land is still going briskly on, and all who came to buy are buying, and those who wish to sell find an open market. The "cold wave" has of course damaged the State in more than one way; not only has it wrecked the hopes of the season's orange crop, but it has brought down upon Florida a vigorous onslaught from its

enemies, and turned the eyes of the world on its worst side, which was just then additionally exposed to the light on account of the ailure of the "Sarasota Colony" scheme.

The "Sarasota business" was of course a fruitful subject of discussion. We found it very generally regarded as a salutary warning against buying land without seeing it, or, in homely expression, "buying a pig in a poke;" and the usual opinion was, that those who will be rash enough to invest in their porker under such conditions cannot expect the best of bacon.

I do not mean however, in the case of the Sarasota colony, to insinuate the charge of rashness against the Scotch settlers, who were certainly deluded by misrepresentations, especially in regard to the

accommodations they had been led to expect. Whether the land, bought by the company at 3\$ 40 cents an acre, and sold to the settlers at 12\$ 50 cents, was, or was not, worth the latter price, the settlers were led to rely on finding ready for themselves and families the shelter and accommodation which appears to have been conspicuous by its absence. Their castles in the air all rudely dashed to the ground, feeling their hopes betrayed, their energy and their money wasted, small wonder that many of the Sarasota colony, looking round upon the wilderness of pine-trees, "scrub," and sand, desperately pronounced Florida a fraud.

Then down on poor Florida came rattling volleys of abuse from North and East and West. It was a malaria-cursed desert, a

barren wilderness swarming with poisonous snakes and repulsive reptiles; its boasted lakes were "hideous swamps, breathing forth pestilence and death!"

Well, there are swamps enough, and ague and "chills" and fever enough lurking around them. There is a good deal of malaria in Florida; it is idle to deny it; but with care in selecting locality, and precautions in mode of life, diet, and clothing, especially avoidance of extremes of heat and cold and over-exertion, there is but little risk of contracting it.

When we were staying in Orlando, one of our little party fell ill one night, with an attack of high fever and aching pains; and we observed, at the hotel table, that we supposed his complaint must be malarial fever.

“Malaria? *No*, madam!” said a gentleman at the head of the table, in most positive tones. “He *can’t* have malarial fever, for there is *no* malaria here!—*Unless*,” he added with an after-thought, “he has been imprudent enough to be out-of-doors after sunset.”


I thought I ought to have *my* pulse felt, as I had been out-of-doors during and after sunset, and often in the moonlight till well on towards midnight, every evening the whole winter long. I must add that during the whole winter I never had the slightest indisposition; and the majority of our party enjoyed equally good health—many of them, who had been in Australia, Madeira, and other noted health-resorts, agreeing with unanimous emphasis, that they had *never* known

a climate that suited them so well as this.

We discovered, by the way, that we were "below the line" of safety as considered by most of the insurance companies, who decline to insure your life at the usual rates below latitude 30°. South of that line you are supposed to hold your life at greater risk, and pay accordingly. This discovery affected the most heavily insured of our party with some dismay, as we were considerably below latitude 29°; and one whose convalescence was not quite complete, took the precaution of giving instructions that in case he should happen to be seized with serious illness, he should be forthwith and without fail carried to the depot and put on the train to be conveyed north of the important line.

As to poisonous reptiles, even the most enthusiastic advocates and best friends of Florida cannot say of the land of their affection, as Erin's sons can of the Emerald Isle, "There are no snakes there!" The utmost they can assert, and what they generally lose no opportunity of asserting on this subject, is that they, "in the course of a long residence in the State," have never seen any.

Now, I must acknowledge that I never saw a live snake in Florida, but then I always carefully avoided walking off the path in the woods. Others of our colony had on various occasions the pleasure of informal introductions to the Florida snakes on their native soil. A. killed a rattlesnake, skinned it, and sent the dried skin home to his family. B. encountered a big



mocassin six feet long in the scrub down on the brink of our favourite lake. C., while on his way to work on a friend's "wild land," trod on the head—lucky for him it was not the tail!—of a hooded snake, which rose up, and hissed, darted its tongue and spread out its hood, and looked, as he described it, "the most vicious-looking brute you ever saw!" Having no stick nor other weapon at hand, he thought discretion the better part of valour, and beat a retreat, leaving his snake-ship in undisputed possession of the field.

For the non-sporting members of the community, who have not got a grove to work on, and—as tourists or "convalescents"—take no active part in business, speculating or investing, buying or selling, there

is very little to do in this life of dream-like monotony, wherein the days, all precisely like each other, roll by like shining beads slipping off a string. But then the very charm of it consists in its utter and essential *dolce far niente*.

Still we seize upon every crumb of excitement like a hungry dog upon a bone. The family of Nimrod are well represented amongst us, and they find time only too short, while earth and air and water are full of creatures to kill; and to them we owe most of our little "events of the day," and many and many a supper of quail, or "dove," and many a breakfast of perch and bass, while half the ladies' hats in the house are trimmed with the bright plumages of the birds that have fallen their prey. There are fine fish to be caught, especially in Lake

Maitland, where one day a fifteen-pound trout is landed and carried home in triumph, and its portrait painted life-size by "our own artist" before it is handed over to our cook.

Nimrod junior once hears that a young alligator has been seen on the bank of a small lake in the neighbourhood. Of course he knows no peace till he has gone in search of it, and found it, and shot it, and brought it home, and displayed his spoil on the piazza. His triumph however is somewhat dashed when an indignant letter arrives from a resident on the banks of the lake, reproaching young Nimrod for the slaughter of the writer's favourite alligator, which it appears was a kind of domestic pet, and had been bred from a baby under its owner's eye.

A baby alligator is an article with which

the Florida tourist is supposed to be especially desirous to provide himself, if I may judge of the expected demand by the supply kept in stock. There may be a difficulty in procuring some little luxuries which to our insular notions have always appeared hitherto among the necessities of life; but wherever there is anything worthy the name of a city in Florida, you can always supply yourself with a fine young alligator, and be accommodated with a box to put him in, and send him North by mail, alive, to your friends or relations. That is, you can send him alive, and it isn't your fault if he is dead when he arrives at his destination. Perhaps after all your friends would as soon receive his cold remains as himself in full health and vigour, with active jaws!—though an alligator is a convenient kind of

pet in one way, as you need only feed him about once a week.

“There’s to be a nigger wedding in the laundry to-night,” is our evening news. We do not often get any evening news at all—or morning news either, for the matter of that; and breaks in the monotony of life are so few and far between that, when this interesting piece of tidings is followed by an intimation that our presence at the ceremony would not be deemed an intrusion, some of the party catch at the idea. Others cannot be allured from the fascination of their game at “euchre” in the parlour, while some other indolent ones refuse to be tempted from their rocking chairs and pipes on the piazza even by the prospect of a “nigger

wedding." It is quite as well that we do not all decide to go, as the accommodation of the laundry is limited. It is a lovely night. The silvery moonlight is bright as day; we can see to read by it. We saunter out by ones and twos and threes—but the units and trios have somehow all drifted and settled into pairs by the time we reach our destination. We plod through the heavy sand—collecting all the way of course the sandspurs which fondly cling to our garments—through the grove and the outskirts of the wood, to the remote corner of the grounds where the laundry—a little wooden cottage, outside of which we are accustomed to see the various articles of our wardrobe flapping in the breeze—is modestly secluded.

The entrance-door leads us straight into a small room, which is so crowded from wall to wall with our coloured brethren and sisters that we cannot see how it is furnished, or whether there is any furniture at all beyond a bed, on which some of the wedding-guests have deposited their bonnets and shawls—thereby nearly leading to a catastrophe, as the heaviest and most substantially built of our party, proceeding to take a seat on the edge of the bed, all but sat on a baby, which was as snugly and successfully hidden away beneath shawls, as Moses beneath the bulrushes. The catastrophe having been averted, and place made for us somehow, as in a crowd there is always room for a few more, the guests all fell back and formed a circle

round the bridal couple—and a very young couple they were ! the bride being only about fourteen, though looking a little older.

She was as much the cynosure of all eyes in her little circle as a *Morning-Post*-chronicled bride at St. George's, Hanover Square, and was just as conscious of her proud position. She was clad in white muslin, with an enormous wreath, that made her look top-heavy, especially as her black face was modestly inclined on one side, turned away from the bridegroom, until it nearly rested on her shoulder.

*He* was attired in a beautiful brown velvet coat ; he had on a pair of the biggest white gloves I ever saw ; and the attitude in which he kept his left hand, laid upon his heart, with the fingers

outspread, displayed the extravagant waste of material in these gloves, which extended about an inch beyond the tips of his fingers. The bridegroom was as black as the bride, he could not well have been blacker ! and he looked rather more sheepish than she did ; she, in spite of her downcast face, seemed inclined to giggle, until the minister—also as black as a coal—clad in as glossy broadcloth and as snowy cravat as his white brethren—stepped into place, and began the service.

The only peculiarity I observed about the ceremony was that the baptismal names were omitted, and the important questions were put simply—"O man, wilt thou have this woman ?" and "O woman, wilt thou have this man ?" The service over, the minister dropped the solemnity he had

decorously assumed for the occasion; and his good-humoured ebony face broke into a broad smile that beamed from ear to ear, as he waved his hand with an air of impartial invitation to everybody, and suggested genially that they should "Salute the bride!"

Thereupon ensued a general kissing match, in which I in vain endeavoured to induce our gallant escorts—especially the one who had nearly sat on the baby, and who was reputed a critic and a *connoisseur* in beauty—to take a part. They however made up for their remissness by shaking hands promiscuously and vigorously with all the wedding-guests they could reach.

"That's a handsome velvet coat of the bridegroom's," I observed presently to my

companion as we sauntered along the garden.

"Yes," he replied, "So-and-So sold it to him"—naming a name "of high degree" and not unknown in the historic annals of England.

"Did he? It doesn't look at all in So-and-So's style," I observed, recalling that gentleman's general appearance.

"I don't think it was his own; I think he sold it for some other fellow. He does a good deal in that line," was the reply.

I listened and realised that we were all indeed in a "far countrée!"

What vicissitudes had that coat been through, I wondered, before the unknown "other fellow" came to dispose of it? In what fashionable studios, what æsthetic *salons*, what art-loving circles, had that

picturesque velvet garment disported itself? Did the tailor who turned it out, the ladies whose dainty hands had rested on its sleeve, ever dream of its eventual destiny? To what "base uses" may we come at last!

What a tale could that London coat, which had come to clothe the negro bridegroom on this auspicious occasion, unfold, of its adventures, its early triumphs, and its decline and fall!—and who can say what deeper depths may not be still before it?

## CHAPTER VII.

Our Coloured Brethren—White Folks' Wardrobe appreciated—"Clo' ! Old Clo' !"—A Word of Advice—Washing done at Home !—What is a Cracker ?—Glimpses of Live Crackers.

THE negroes seem to flourish in Florida, although they are not nearly so numerous there as in some others of the Southern States. They get good wages, and find plenty of employment ; indeed the demand for labour is chronically greater than the supply, especially in the line of domestic help. The negroes fill all subordinate offices, from carrying our baggage to cleaning our boots (when we get them cleaned,


which is a luxury that I must confess we do not enjoy so often as we could wish).

Our coloured brethren are often much better off than we could imagine, judging by appearances. Our chambermaid, an old woman with a goodnatured, black, monkey face and friz of wool,—who always looked to me exactly like one of those dark shiny bronze statuettes of the typical negress, come to life—was the proprietress of three cottages, and besides the rent of these, she and her husband possessed between them a sum of three thousand dollars in the bank. Looking at her, as she went about her daily work in an old calico gown, which only a *chiffonière* would have thought worth the picking up! one would not have imagined her the possessor of a bank account at all,

still less of savings counted by the thousand !

The negro who officiated as groom, coachman, gardener, and general out-door *factotum*, was preacher at the coloured church ; and on Sunday he used to turn out quite a clerical *beau* in his ministerial array.

We found that the negroes had a great interest in and admiration for the “white folks’” dress, especially if it came from far-off Paris or London. Moreover they could afford to treat themselves to any article of the white man’s—or woman’s—wardrobe that pleased their fancy—if I may judge by their frank expressions of willingness to “trade.” One old darkey’s attention was attracted by a tailor-made ulster of light cloth worn by a young lady, and he



straightway addressed her on the subject.

"Missie, I'd like to buy that for my wife—what'll you take for it?"

He probably regarded my young friend's refusal to sell her ulster as a trade device; and under the impression that she was merely demurring in order to drive a better bargain, he kept on raising his "bid" till he arrived at the culminating offer—"I give you jes 's much 's you gave for it!"

But even this liberal offer was "declined with thanks."

An old washerwoman cast a longing eye upon a certain black silk dress, which was on its wearer's back, and after paving the way by a few honeyed compliments on its fit and style, arrived at the point.

"What you trade that dress for, ma'am? I'd like to have it for my Sunday gown."

Some of our party must have been disappointing to the admirers of our wardrobe by reason of our refusal to "trade;" but there were others who made amends for our reluctance to part with our "suits and trappings."

Our spruce young negro-waiter appeared one day in a beautiful new coat, of spotless broadcloth, evidently almost fresh from the tailor's. I passed a complimentary remark on his appearance.


"Yis, ma'am—Mr. A.'s coat—he sold it me this morning. Glad you like it, ma'am"—and his black eyes rolled, and all his white teeth showed and seemed to shine with satisfaction.

I looked across the table at Mr. A. He wore no guilty air of consciousness; rather, in no way abashed, he answered my look by a smile as serene as "Ah Sin's"

when he sat down to the memorable "game he did not understand."

There was a kind of freemasonry in our little circle; everybody knew a good deal about everybody else's affairs; and by various signs and tokens we were aware that young A.'s remittances were considerably behind hand; nor did he seem in the least to object to all the world knowing it!

I found him one day in the stable with a couple of old negroes, disinterring from the depths of a huge trunk such articles of his outfit as he deemed he could best spare, and transacting a brisk business with the two ancient darkeys, who with broad smiles overspreading their goodnatured glossy black faces, were driving bargains for "lots" of these surplus articles, from a pair of slippers and a "mosquito-bar"



up to a "patent ventilator" hat and a bran-new overcoat.

When we finally said goodbye to this young man he had almost eaten up his coats, and was going to begin on his boots.


He was one of the many who had come out to Florida full of golden dreams, and had to undergo a sharp and stern awaking. There is no room for dreaming or idling for the *bond fide* settler here, however idyllically and dreamily the days of the mere winter visitor or tourist may glide away. Florida life for those who come out to settle with little or no capital is no child's play, but a hard and stern struggle up hill, although for those who toil bravely onwards, upwards, the goal is prosperity and comfort at last. To quote from the *Orange County Reporter* a few

words of sensible warning to intending immigrants :—

“South Florida is an old and yet a new region. Remember it is but just changing from a wild forest, occupied by a few cattle-men and the Seminole Indians. Its capabilities, though unfolding to the world, are not yet half known. As yet it has the land, the water, and the climate, with just enough improvement to demonstrate its wonderful possibilities. It is never an easy task to clear and reclaim heavily-timbered land ; and in the progress of development hard work will be required, and plenty of it. Careful nursing, patient waiting, and ceaseless vigilance are the price of every successful orange-grove. ‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,’ applies here as elsewhere, with the

usual accompaniments of hard labour in the shape of tired limbs and aching joints."

One of the great difficulties in Florida is the scarcity of labour, more especially domestic "help," which renders housekeeping there an unusually anxious and troublesome responsibility. White "help"—(there are no servants here, only "help") is rare and difficult in the extreme to procure, so that the best and wisest course for an Englishwoman going out to undertake the task of "keeping house" and making a real *home* in Florida, is, if she desires white "helps," to take them out from England with her. It will really pay her better, although it seems at the first glance an expensive and troublesome proceeding, to take out good and trustworthy




servants from home than to rely on what she may be able to get in Florida.

I have seen the lady of the highest position in a small Florida town, "the Governor's wife," living in the handsomest house and occupying in every way the best position in the place, doing all the work, cooking, cleaning, etc., of her own beautiful home. She could well afford to keep "helps," but the difficulty of procuring satisfactory ones, the responsibility of superintending them, and the annoyance of frequent changes, were so great that she preferred to be her own cook and housemaid.

Coloured servants are often very satisfactory ; I for my part should prefer them to white if I were fortunate enough to be able to obtain *good* ones—but *there*, alas ! is

the hitch ; in South Florida you must often take what you can get, and be thankful to get anything at all. Your coloured cook may be slow, indolent, shiftless, untidy, and extravagant—and you may be very grateful if she has no worse faults than these various effects of laziness. Two friends of mine stayed at a hotel, in the far South, down on the Indian River, where no help at all was kept ; the landlady herself did all the cooking, all the chamberwork, all the household washing and general attendance, (of which we may conclude there was not much !) and each lady-guest did her own and her husband's washing, Mrs. Jones having the laundry on Monday, Mrs. Smith on Tuesday, and so on. My friend, unaccustomed to frontier-life, felt half amused, half dismayed, while a deep distrust of her own



hitherto deemed sufficient capacities came over her, when for the first time she was led into the laundry on "her day" and confronted with the problem of the week's linen.

In the extreme South of Florida there are as yet but few negroes. The negro is not adventurous, and he does not push his way into the pioneer regions.

Almost every settlement, however, except in the furthest South, has its "coloured quarter," or "Nigger-town," as it is more often called by the white inhabitants. It is generally a collection of shabby, more or less tumble-down and ramshackle shanties. The negroes congregate together in their own quarter, have their own church, often their own school, and live in their own way. They frequently have no stoves nor chim-

neys in their houses ; and during the frost one might see great bonfires built up out in the road, and whole families grouped around them, warming themselves—the children in their gay-coloured dresses, looking like so many gaudy parrots as we saw them from a distance. One black baby I saw, a tiny Topsy in a little scarlet frock, dancing imp-like in the glow of the fire, who looked so like an organ-grinder's monkey she only needed to have been supplied with a tail and perched on a barrel-organ, to complete the resemblance and gather in a goodly harvest of coppers.

Of the “cracker” population we saw very little, and we never could get any one to define to us exactly and satisfactorily what a “cracker” is. It was as

difficult to ascertain the precise meaning of the term as Byron seems to have found it to induce ladies to define exactly what stage of maturity was meant by "a certain age."

"Crackers are the original white settlers," is the answer of one authority to whom I apply for the solution of the difficulty.

"Crackers are the fellows who used to be cattle men in the old days, and they get their name from the cracking of their whips," is another's reply.

"Crackers are the poor whites, the white trash," says a third.



"*I'm* a cracker!" avers a prosperous gentleman who certainly is "white" and an "old settler," but in no other respect answers to our idea of a cracker—an idea

which we have naturally formed from the few live specimens which have crossed our path.

When we noticed, ambling along, a nondescript-looking man, long, lank, and lantern-jawed, tallow-cheeked and loose-jointed, with a general air of being badly put together and likely to fall to pieces—in garments which were too evidently a “scratch team” and were never made to match or fit—mounted on a shambling horse coming nearer to the pictures of poor Don Quixote’s Rosinante than any living steed we ever saw, and inquired who and what he was—

“Oh, one of the crackers!” was the reply.

When we came on a rough log-cabin, or a windowless shanty, with door and shutters swinging on rusty hinges, and



admirably ventilated walls whose chinks the wind could whistle freely through, surrounded by a weedy tract of unkempt garden, it was "a cracker's place."


Once we met an old man—originally white, but sunburnt to more than mulatto brown, in a faded blue flannel shirt, with no coat, but in the stead thereof a blanket—(in urgent need of being sent to the laundry)—pinned round his shoulders with a skewer, a huge straw hat with half the brim divorced from the crown, an ancient-fashioned gun in one hand, and in the other the spoils of the chase, a coon and two grey squirrels, which he was offering for sale. I caught our artist surreptitiously sketching the old fellow on his linen cuff, as a fine specimen of the typical Florida Cracker.

Reputed to be well-nigh as "shiftless" as the coloured race, but always holding themselves rigorously apart from the "niggers," the gulf of race antagonism yawning wide between them, the crackers are yet, I am told, as a rule, a kindly and good-natured people, to whose simple hospitality the weary and belated traveller will never appeal in vain,

## CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Punch's Counsel—To all about to go to Florida—To Bad Sailors—The Atlantic Coast Route—The Commercial and Social Centre—The Finest Harbour—The Ocean Drive—The Oldest City in the States—The Lovely Land of Lakes!

BEFORE I take up my notes of the Indian River and the Gulf Coast, a few words to those who are thinking of going to Florida, either for the winter, or with a view to permanent residence, may not come amiss here. To the former I would say, "Go by all means! you will find no more delightful winter resort. But don't do as *we* did and leave all your wraps behind! Put a few winter garments in your trunk.



You may very likely not need them if you take them, but the perversity of Fate is such that you will most certainly need them if you go without them !”

To the latter class, I would *not* give Mr. Punch's brief “advice to those about to marry !” I would say, “Go ! but first think well what it is that you are about to do !” If you take out with you a good business faculty, energy and caution, shrewdness and foresight, and, above all, capital, the more the better, as money makes money all the world over, you will find abundant opportunities for lucrative investment ; and, although an orange-grove is excellent property, its value surely and steadily increasing as the trees mature, you will discover plenty to do in Florida besides orange-growing.

If you start without capital—well! you will have a hard time anywhere, and possibly quite as hard a time in Florida as elsewhere. Florida for young men without money means steady hard work or dead failure. Camping-out to “clear” wild-land, is no picnic; and wielding


“A spade, a rake, a hoe,  
A pick-axe or a bill!”

in the tropical sunshine makes the limbs ache and the head throb. Still even without capital, you may get on by dint of energy and pluck and—last, but perhaps not least—luck. And you will find getting-on the easier because you can do in Florida what you would feel it *infra dig.* to do at home. As in all the new countries, labour is honourable here; and the old superstitions and conventionalisms

of caste are trodden under foot. You would not mend roads in England! but you could do it in Florida—that is, if there were any roads to mend. You must be ready to take up anything that comes to your hand, an axe, a pitchfork, or even a broom! I have seen a young man of good family, good breeding, and good education, hauling baggage and sweeping out the hall and the yard, and accepting his position cheerfully, as a stepping-stone to better things—looking ahead to the brighter days that he deserves, and which will, I trust, dawn on him ere long.

The usual route, the best and most direct, to Florida, from England, is *via* New York, from which city there is an ample choice of ways for the traveller proceeding South.


The "Mallory Line" steamers run direct from New York to Fernandina, the northernmost point in the state of Florida, in four days. The "Ocean Steamships" run between New York and Savannah, making the trip generally in about sixty hours. From Savannah it is only a few hours rail to Jacksonville, which may be said to be the Floridian metropolis, its social and commercial centre, although Tallahassee is its political capital. These "Ocean Steamships" are exceedingly comfortable and well-appointed; but the sea voyage, even under the most favourable conditions, has its terrors for all those who are subject to King *Mal de Mer*, beneath whose stern sway the strongest of us have been known to succumb the most ignominiously. For these his victims, "bad sailors"—with whom



none but a fellow-victim can sympathise !— the best route is by rail direct from New York to Jacksonville.

The Atlantic Coast Express makes this journey, a thousand miles, in thirty-six hours, leaving New York at midnight, and arriving in Jacksonville at twelve o'clock on the second day. The two nights spent in comfortable berths of the Pullman Sleepers are no ordeal; the *mauvais quart d'heure* is that of retiring at night, and still worse, that of getting up in the morning, when looking down the narrow curtained passage of the car, you see the curtains bulging into extraordinary shapes as each passenger wrestles in the cramped seclusion of his or her berth with the difficulties of the earliest stages of the toilet. Then comes a siege of the door of the cupboard dignified by the


name of "Ladies' Dressing-room," as we all naturally desire to dress at the same time, in order to get ready for breakfast. In various eccentric *déshabillé* costumes, in wrappers—ulsters—dressing-jackets, with dishevelled hair, looking and feeling forlorn, unkempt, and uncomfortable, each one grasping her travelling-bag with comb and brush and sponge and tooth-brush, we besiege the door in turn. But this ordeal over for the day, there is no further inconvenience in the journey. With novels and newspapers, fancy work for us, and the smoking-car for our escorts, and for us all social chat with our fellow-passengers and the interest of watching the passing landscape and the changing scene, there is plenty of enjoyment and entertainment in this journey from winter to summer—from



the snow-covered ground and frosty trees of the Northern States to the green woods, the fruits, and flowers, of the South.

Jacksonville, the busiest and brightest city in Florida, has still, except in its principle thoroughfares, an unfinished air, suggestive of sawdust and shavings. It is still progressing, still on the move ; a city with more potential than actual beauty as yet ; its long streets run away untidily into ragged edges in the outskirts of the town ; but its best residential quarter is very pretty and picturesque ; laid out in broad avenues, bordered by splendid oak trees, whose great branches arch and interlace over one street seventy feet wide, making it one long bower of cool green shade.


Giant oleander and magnolia trees adorn



the gardens that surround most of the houses—light summery-looking wooden villas in all varieties and shades of colour, size, and style of architecture—only agreeing in the one feature of breaking out in piazzas and balconies wherever windows and doors afford opportunities therefor.

The orange-trees in Jacksonville are not such splendid specimens as we find further South ; but an orange-grove, even not of the finest, is always a pretty and pleasant sight to eyes fresh from the white winter of the North. There are some fair palmettos ; and an occasional banana-tree waves its long leaves gently in the breeze—or did before the frost.

The roads are very heavy and sandy ; some of them, especially in the outskirts, look like strips of Sahara ! and a drive




thereon is rather a penance than a pleasure. Bay Street is the principal business street; and there are excellent shops and plenty of them, where you can buy almost anything you could get in New York, with the addition of various "Florida Curiosities," polished sea-beans variously set, fish-scale jewellery, fans and feathers of brilliant plumage of tropical birds, alligators' teeth mounted in gold as pins and brooches, and last, not least, according to the advertisements "The Finest and Cheapest Young Alligators in Town!" Of hotels and boarding-houses the name is legion, as the full flood tide of Northern travel, during the winter, pours into Florida, chiefly by way of Jacksonville. The best hotels are only open in "the season," closing in April and not opening

again till December. "A short season and a merry one!"


Fernandina, the finest harbour on the Atlantic coast of Florida, is a pretty and prosperous place, and a popular winter resort, remarkable for its fine hotel accommodation, and for its celebrated "ocean drive" along Amelia Island beach—an expanse of smooth, hard, level sand, stretching for nearly twenty miles, and affording a drive on the very verge of the ocean, which can nowhere be surpassed.

These two cities, Jacksonville and Fernandina, are the entrance gates of Florida (unless indeed you enter from the West Indies or New Orleans, and land on the Gulf Coast); and in both the winter tourist will find plenty of social inter-



course, and amusement, and the best of hotels.

The most interesting place in this—the Northern—portion of Florida, is, however, the picturesque old Spanish city of St. Augustine, the earliest European settlement in the United States, having been founded by the Spaniards fifty-five years before the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. With its quaint narrow streets, unpaved and sandy—its curious old houses with their tiny windows and massive walls (built of “coquina,” that curious material formed of solid masses of crushed shell, dug out of Anastasia Island), these old Spanish dwellings set in between the more modern, yet not very modern looking, wooden buildings of a later day—with its palm and oleander and banana-trees—with its



memorable ancient city gates, the only relic of the old Spanish wall that once stretched from shore to shore, left standing still—with its “Lovers Walk” along the sea wall—and the old “Fort Marion,” dating back to 1592, and to-day used as a stronghold to confine the Apache Indians, prisoners of war (all these remains of ancient days being built of solid “coquina”)—St. Augustine is perhaps the most romantic, picturesque, and interesting place to be found in the South; and none should deem a visit to Florida complete without making some stay in this the oldest city in the States.

From Jacksonville to St. Augustine is an easy and pleasant trip by either river or rail. Jacksonville is the starting-point for

everywhere. Either the direct all-rail route to Orlando, or the St. John's River steamers, will take the traveller from Jacksonville into Orange County—in the heart of the great "Orange Belt" region—and strike the South Florida Rail-road for Tampa on the Gulf of Mexico.


There can, I think, be no more beautiful and healthful spot to be found in Florida than the neighbourhood of Lake Maitland and Winter Park, lying high on the rolling pine-lands that rise gradually and imperceptibly all the way from the St. John's River. Lovely lakes are set like emeralds and sapphires framed in the forest green. The air is alike balmy and bracing; the east wind here—unrecognisable as the cruel wind of winter, that "shatters down the snowflakes, off the curdled sky," the

demon of our English climate!—is a mild caressing breeze, breathing sweet and fresh from the gracious Gulf Stream, fanning our hair and touching our faces softly as a kiss!

If there is a certain monotony in these level “rolling pine-lands” of the South, whose rise and decline is so gradual as to be imperceptible—yet, as the swift bright days glide away here, in this very monotony there gradually grows to be a charm. We cease to long for the swelling and sinking of hill and valley, for the purple outlines of distant mountains; we ask no more for the rugged Alpine beauty of cliff and peak; our eyes find repose and peace, and seek nothing further than this stirless dream-like serenity, in the peaceful smiling orange-groves, in the fair lakes that mirror earth and heaven, in the ranks of tall, slim, stately pines that

rear their graceful feathery heads into the azure light of a sky of immeasurable, infinite depths of blue.


And then there is that hour of beauty when, at sunset, the western heavens are all one clear and cloudless blaze of scarlet light, when a pale roseate haze softly flows over and suffuses the whole landscape from west to east; and the over-arching azure deepens into diviner and more dream-like hues, before the rosy gleams of the lakes, shining through the shadowy woods, fade into pale spots of light, before the rapid tropical twilight swiftly steals the colour from sky and wood and water, and the lovely day wears on to night as fair.



## CHAPTER IX.

On board the "Waunita"—The Upper St. John's River—  
A Happy Fellow-passenger—A Novel Experience—The  
Fording of Snake Creek—Rock Ledge—Out of the World  
—Where Ignorance is Bliss—Cracker Time and Cracker  
Ways—A Modern Robin Hood.

THE Indian River region is one of the most promising sections of Florida, although it is as yet only in the course of being "opened up," and has the drawbacks of a new country; the life is frontier, the means of transit primitive, at least down at the Southern end of the river; but progress is rapid here, and things will improve year by year, nay, month by month. It was the first of February when we turned our faces



thither. We chose to travel by the Upper St. John's steamer route; and the early morning train bore us from Lake Maitland to Sanford, the "Gate City" of South Florida, the central point where trains and steamers from all points of the compass meet.

Although so early in the year, it was yet warm enough for us to be glad that it was only a short walk from the Sanford railway depot to the wharf where the steamer "Waunita" lay.

This little vessel, which navigates the crooked and winding ways of the Upper St. John's River, where a larger craft could not pass, is very comfortably fitted up, small as it is. We cast appreciative glances round the prettily decorated little saloon, with its sofas and rocking-chairs; we inspected the

tiny little sleeping-rooms, with their clean white berths, and presently carried out two easy-chairs on to the little strip of deck forward of the saloon, and sat down to enjoy the landscape in peace and comfort, and in the society of our fellow-passengers, who also, one and all—fortunately, the “all” was not a crowd, as the slip of deck was narrow!—brought their chairs and camp-stools outside.

Once fairly embarked on the passage of the Upper St. John's, we soon find ourselves in the midst of tropical-looking scenery. Between low banks of rich hammock woods and groves of the beautiful cabbage palmettoes (sometimes briefly called “cabbage trees,” by the native Floridians) the river winds and curls its way, now broadening into a wide lagoon, now narrowing into a mere stream, and anon divided into two


channels by a cypress-covered island. Here and there great cypresses grow thickly as a forest down along the water's edge, their wintry, leafless branches heavily draped with hanging veils of the dry grey Spanish moss.

In curious contrast to the glossy dark green palmettoes and the rich luxuriance of the hammock foliage on the opposite banks, these bare, white skeleton cypresses, looking grim as death in their enshrouding palls of hoary grey moss, stand out cold and gaunt between blue river and blue sky.

Every now and then we come upon flocks of coot or wild ducks, or a great turtle basking on a log ; then curlews, pelicans, herons, and other, to us, strange birds ; then half a dozen white cranes standing all in a row, looking at our steamer, as if they wondered

what the strange thing was, but were not at all afraid of it. No sportsman is allowed to shoot from the deck of these vessels, as the birds were being fast killed or frightened away, till this regulation was made.

Pleasantly the hours wear away, in watching the serpentining mazes of the river—the lance-like leaves of the palmettos seeming to prick the burning blue of the cloudless sky—the grey-veiled cypresses, their hoary streamers floating on the gentle breeze—the tangle of oak and magnolia matted with curling vines—the white flash of the cranes' flight, as they dart across the deeps of blue! One of our fellow-passengers takes such delight in all these things that his gratitude overflows towards the authorities through whom he obtains the privilege of this day's enjoyment.



His enthusiasm finds vent in the grateful exclamation—"Now I call it real good of the Captain and company to give us this beautiful trip for five dollars!"

This gentleman's appreciation extends to the certainly excellent meals which are served to us in the neat little saloon. His encomiums embrace the tender venison steak, the cutlets, the eggs, the fish, the hot biscuits.


It is good to witness his hearty and whole-souled admiration of the kindness of the cook and the assiduity of the steward. His enjoyment of his own meal is only second to his delight in handing us what he deems the daintiest dishes, seasoned with such friendly observations as "Good this, eh?" "Do they do things any better on your side?" It is really a satisfaction to us to

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be able to raise his spirits still higher, by the assurance that, even "on *our* side," we should not—at least on board a small steamer—do things any better—nay, probably not so well!

We watch the sun go down in a golden blaze behind the woods; then, gathered together in the cosy little saloon, we talk and tell travellers' tales, and old stories over again, to beguile away the time until such an hour as we can reasonably call time to retire.

During the night, waking once or twice and looking out of the window, we see that we are passing through a dreary expanse of flat lands, swamp and scrub, and reedy lakes—a scene which looks bare and desolate in the pale cold moonlight, and gives us the satisfactory impression that



we are not losing much by passing through this portion of the route by night.

In the morning we find ourselves at our landing place, Lake Poinsett; but we do not land until we have enjoyed a good breakfast on board the "Waunita."

The landing place consists of a rude wharf, a shed, a few barrels, a pile of lumber, and two waggons, each drawn by a pair of mules, standing by the wharf axle-deep in water. The guide books had informed us that "comfortable hacks" await the travellers at Lake Poinsett. These huge, lumbering vehicles—which may once have rejoiced in a coat of paint, but have lost all trace and reminiscence of the colouring which probably beautified them in their early days—remind us forcibly of the vegetable-carts at Covent Garden Market at

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the stage when they have just unloaded their freight, and have not got rid of their sticks and straws.

But there is no mistake about it, that these are the comfortable hacks! for no other ghost of a vehicle is to be seen; and really, when we have been hoisted up and packed ourselves into them, they are not so uncomfortable as their exterior threatened they would prove.

We start off on our watery road, the mules splashing steadily through the shallow stream, on either side of which spreads a level expanse of grass and rushes. Why cannot we drive on the grass instead of in the water, we inquire; and are answered that *there* is only soft, boggy morass, while the road under the water is good and hard. So we splash on


the watery way, rather enjoying the novelty of the process.

We get through the water at last ; and drive on a rough road through the wilderness until we arrive at "Snake Creek," where the driver has warned us that "there is a little more water to be got through." There is indeed ! Snake Creek spreads before us like a sea ! the mules plunge into it, and plod along as if well used to it, splashing ever deeper and deeper, following a sinuous track of which we cannot see the slightest mark or sign.

Deeper and deeper still we go, till the water rises not only above the axles, but over the tops of the wheels ; and we no longer wonder why these vehicles are built so unusually high. In a waggon of ordinary


build the water would be up over our ankles, if not up to our knees. The enthusiast who so delighted in the previous day's voyage is of our party in this waggon; and his unabated spirits find vent now, as we ford the deepest part of the creek, in cries of affected terror and anguish—"O my old mother!" varied by loud and fervent yearnings for his grandmother and his two maiden aunts! and by asseverations that he will "get out and swim!" Only in compliance with our earnest entreaties does he desist from sitting on the side of the waggon, swinging his feet over the water, and ever and anon professing to be about to leap to the plunge!

The driver, emulous of this evidently popular passenger's powers of entertainment thinks it time to distinguish himself also



in that line, and begins to divert us by "alligator stories." His back being towards us, we cannot see the broad grin that doubtless overspreads his face as he draws upon his imagination, and describes the ferocity of the voracious saurian for the benefit of the supposed-to-be-guileless and gullible "Britishers"—who have, however, been too long in Florida to swallow "'gator stories!"

Between the lively passenger and the anecdotal driver, the time spent in splashing through Snake Creek passes quickly, although several times, as the water rises up to the flanks of the mules, it appears to us that the animals must be swimming, and that a boat would be a far more appropriate mode of conveyance than a waggon. At last we reach *terra firma* again, high and dry ;



and after another mile or so of driving through wilderness primæval, we reach our destination.

Rock Ledge is situated on what is by many people of experience held to be the very best of all the Florida lands—high “shell-hammock” land—the shore of the Indian River here being formed of coquina rock. Its location on the low bluffs on the west side of the Indian River, in the midst of a perfect forest of palmetto trees, is one of the most picturesque we have yet seen.

Our waggon deposits us at the Tropical House, as the great new Indian River Hotel is not yet opened.

We find the Tropical House most comfortable and homelike, although somewhat more primitive in its accommodation and arrangements than the place.

we have lately left. It is close to the river, which here is from half to three quarters of a mile wide, the opposite shore being the long narrow island called "Merritt's," which separates the Indian from the Banana River, beyond which, across a narrow slip of land, rolls the Atlantic Ocean.

On the wharf just below our windows nautical-looking men are loafing about, talking and smoking. There are two or three little sailing boats and a couple of row-boats, tied up to posts; one white sail, and one alone, swiftly scudding down stream, breaks the monotony of the blank blue expanse of the Indian River.

How still it is here! how far, far out of the world it seems! what a sense of remoteness comes over us as we look up

and down the broad rolling river ! Looking northward along the banks, we see the tall stately palmetto trees, some—but few—lightly veiled with Spanish moss, lifting their spiky crowns high above the roof of the hotel and neighbouring buildings ; then southward along the banks, and still the serried ranks of tall palmettoes raise their stately heads, and, except for the voices of the men talking on the wharf, deep silence seems to brood over the land !

No echo from the outer world reaches us here. No shriek of the locomotive ! no clatter of cars ! no chiming of a bell ! no roll of wheels ! no railroad has yet come near this remote and primitive little settlement ; there is even no carriage road, except the rough route through the backwoods to Lake Poinsett.

After one day here we feel as if we had left the world—*our* world—so far behind that either this or that must be a dream ! The one link between us and that outer world is a steamer—the *Indian River*, of the well-named “ Pioneer Line ” ; but even this—at least at the time of our visit to Rock Ledge—is so uncertain in its movements that it seems rather to force us to realise the distance than the proximity, the difficulty than the ease, of communication with the world—the busy, moving world beyond, with which this connects us. No one—at this season at least—seems to know exactly when the vessel will arrive or depart ; and, moreover, no one seems to care—or to think it matters at all. If she does not come to-day, she will to-morrow, is the

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prevalent tone of answer to inquiries. "She'll be along about five o'clock?" "No, she won't, she'll not come till nine or ten." "She'll run down to Melbourne next trip!" "No, she won't; she'll stop here," and so forth, say our various sources of information.

There is a tiny little steamer—which is announced and intended to run to the southern end of the river—which looks like a coffee-pot as it comes puffing fussily along, when we see it at last. For some days we do not see it; and further no one seems to know exactly where the little craft is.

"Say, have you seen the *Haulover*?"

"Well, the *Diana* she saw her day before yesterday up river."

"She went up this morning."

"Why, she went down yesterday!"

"It's four days since she went down."

"She's lying at Cocoa."

"She's up at Titusville;" are some of the conflicting reports.

Says one in compassionate tones,

"The poor thing's took sick and stopped for a little rest ! Laid up for repairs at the blacksmith's."

This last surmise turns out to be the correct one.

We make inquiries about an "Elegant Passenger Schooner Yacht" which is advertised to make weekly trips to Lake Worth, and find that she has not run for six weeks, and no one has the least idea when she will run again, but every one sanguinely surmises that "she'll come along some day."

Even the mail boats apparently come and

go, or neither come nor go, just as they and the winds, and tides list; but then they are small sail-boats dependent on these latter potent influences. No doubt arrangements will very soon be made for the mail to be carried more expeditiously and regularly.

But at present in these regions "We take no count of time save from its loss!" Nay, we go further, and take no count of time at all. Even the simple everyday inquiry "What's o'clock?"—or, as they put it here, "Have you the time?"—receives no decisive or satisfactory answer. One man gives you "sun-time"—otherwise known as "local" or "cracker-time;" the next tells you "railway," or "standard time;" another keeps something between the two; and as there is from half to three quarters of an hour's difference between "sun time"

and "standard time," no one ever seems to know precisely what o'clock it is.

But "what does it matter?" as the "general utility" boy of the hotel observed—in gentle surprise at our incomprehensible desire to know the "right time"—"A bell will ring when dinner's ready!" And except for meals, there certainly is no particular reason for wanting to know "what's o'clock?" in this train-less, car-less, steam-less, seclusion.

The visitors at the "Tropical House" are chiefly on sporting bent, and amongst them, for a wonder, we find none of our own countrymen. They are out all day shooting, or fishing; and some of them, with their long hair, pale hollow cheeks, soft voices, jack boots, broad hats, and

flannel shirts, guiltless of collar or cuff, look exactly like the ideal "Texan Rangers" and "Indian scouts" who figured in the *Tales of the Frontier* which delighted my childhood. We sit out on the piazza in the moonlight evenings, and watch the river gleaming like molten silver, and the feathery crowns of the palmettoes, pale against the purple sky !

How strangely these palms rattle in the wind ! their rustle is unlike that of other trees ; the sound of their stir is like pouring, pelting rain.

"I tell you," says one of the oldest settlers, in the soft sleepy Southern drawl, "there's no tree like the cabbage tree ! Did you ever see a cabbage tree dying of old age ? I tell you, you can't see the end of it, not unless you cut it

down! Age don't wither it; fire won't take hold of it to burn it; moss don't cling on it, nor sun don't wither it, nor wind blow it down! Hev' you seen a palmetto bend before the wind, and lay all its long leaves out straight, and just *give*, so't the wind don't find nothing to take hold of?"


Another time this same authority gives us *his* views on the ways and manners of new settlers in this region.

"Northern man comes down here, and he sees a cracker ploughing jest about as they may have done in Egypt two thousand years ago—jes' turning up the ground with a crooked stick. Well, Northern man he thinks he knows a sight better than that, and he brings down a grand modern plough and a fine team, and he ploughs jes' same

as he would in Illinois. But somehow he don't get on ; he don't make money, y'see ; and there's the cracker going on in his contemptible slow way, with his old-fashioned tools, and the money coming in and coming in. The Northern man he gets disgusted ; but he doesn't see that it's himself that's in fault ; the native knows the ways of this place, and knows jest how to get along !”

We listen respectfully, if not very clearly comprehending why modern agricultural improvements should be less desirable here than in Illinois, unless indeed the poor “ Northern man ” laid out more capital upon them than he could afford to expend.

“ Now there's a cracker over there ”—our informant continues, waving his pipe in the direction of the other side




of the river—"he makes a living, and makes money too, out of jest one acre. It's good land, to be sure—no better land in Florida—and he's put one half of it in pine-apples, and the other half in tomatoes and roast'n' ears and garden truck. And now he can afford to give nine hundred dollars—I wouldn't be surprised if he can give a thousand—for the next acre of land. It's fine land for tomatoes, and they pay—I tell you winter tomatoes for the Northern markets *pay!*"

We enjoy listening to the views of the settlers, old and new, in this pioneer country. One relates to us how he arrived there just one year ago with twenty cents in his pocket—how he "got work right away" at a dollar and a half per day,

and his wife worked too, washed and 'did chores'— how from their earnings they put by, little by little, until he could buy a lot, and build a house; and now, a year from the time when they arrived without a dollar, the lot was bought and the house was built— "And a tidy little place too," he concludes with a cordial invitation to us to "walk over and see it."

Another evening the conversation took a turn which made us feel as if we had gone back to the days of Robin Hood. Some allusion brought up the subject of the "James gang"— the notorious brigands and train-robbers of the South-West. A soft-eyed Southern girl was the chief spokeswoman here; but all the circle listened with apparent



sympathy to the expression of her opinions on the subject.

"Every one sympathised with the James boys!" she said.

"Every one in Missouri," put in one of the listeners in respectful amendment.

"And outside Missouri they couldn't know so much about it as we did!" the young lady replied. She added with a retrospective smile, "How glad we all were when Frank James was acquitted! And such an ovation as he had! A torchlight procession in his honour, and the cars had to be stopped because they would have him make a speech!"

She continued with soft enthusiasm her sympathetic account of the James boys and their band and their doughty

deeds—her eulogies of their “elegant manners,” their dauntless courage, and unerring aim! With tender appreciation she related their “way of doing things”—how they used to dash into a town and “just clear the streets,” shooting down every man who ventured to offer obstruction or interference—how they burst into such-and-such a bank and shot down the cashier at his post—“what dead shots” they were—and as good with the left hand as with the right—and never missed their man!—how many men they had killed—and by what vile contemptible treachery Jesse James was slain at last—“Shot in the back, the poor fellow! just as he stood hanging up a picture on the wall!”—how triumphantly Frank James escaped from

the snares of his enemies, and now kept a fine store in—I forget what Western city.

The idea that the tragic end of the brigand chief might possibly inspire less compassion in our hearts than the fate of his many victims, evidently never occurred to this gentle enthusiast.

## CHAPTER X.

Beneath the Wild Palmetto Tree—Orange Packing—  
Indian River Lands—Alone in Life and Death—"Earth  
to Earth"—The Grave in the Wilderness !

OUR week at Rock Ledge wore away very pleasantly, although there was nothing much either to do or to see there. The stream of life rolled on sluggishly, with scarce a ripple to break its smooth and even-flowing surface.

When we had walked northward along the bank under the palmetto trees, past the new hotel—a splendid building, with every promise of Northern comforts—which

was just about to open—and walked southwards along the bank under the palmetto trees, and sat on rustic stiles and fallen trunks, with

“Palm trees to right of us,

Palm trees to left of us,”

palm branches over our heads and palmetto scrub at our feet—when we had visited the “packing-houses,” and looked over a grove or two—there remained nothing else to do, as the weather was breezy and not propitious for sailing, the river running high and rough, and the boats on its surface tossing in a manner that made the idea of a pleasure-trip by water in no wise tempting.

The packing-houses were an interesting and novel sight to us—large, bare, barnlike buildings, devoted exclusively to the purpose of storing and packing the orange

crop, the floor covered, the shelves piled, every corner heaped high with the golden fruit, which men were busy packing in rough wooden boxes. I earned my footing by packing a box myself, of whose neat and symmetrical arrangement I was justly proud, while my escort, emulating my practical utility, took hammer, nails, and wood, and vigorously went to work and made boxes, while the grove owner, hard at work packing, looked round approvingly at his amateur help.

The oranges on the Indian River—(said to be the finest in Florida)—had suffered but little from the cold, although they had endured as much as ten degrees of frost. Some of the fruit of course was damaged, but a goodly portion of it was fresh, juicy, and delicious. The oranges we saw being


packed were for shipment North, and seemed to be in perfectly good condition. Every morning a bough freshly gathered from the grove, with the glossy leaves and golden fruit growing on it, was laid by our plates. Whilst around Lake Maitland the oranges had fallen from the trees, here the branches were still laden, and men at work plucking and packing. The bananas, however, even here, were all injured if not destroyed—cut down to the very roots, and the guavas all killed, whole groves of them reduced to mere withered skeletons.

I spent a good deal of time on the wharf watching the boats come and go—looking in vain for the promised “Weekly passenger schooner to Lake Worth,” which was chronically expected to “come along some time.” One day she did come along,

laden with a cargo of furniture and goods for the new hotel, and with no possible passenger accommodation of any sort or kind. We inquired when she would be running to Lake Worth, and received the answer which a week's experience of the Indian River had led us to expect,

"S'pose we'll be going down some time or another."

The steamer promised to be running on schedule-time "next week," but as its schedule-time had been advertised as in working order for weeks past, we took the liberty of doubting its punctuality now, and at best it would only have conveyed us a little way further down the river. The little steamer *Haulover* promised to run further on the way to Lake Worth; but on the wharf, where I




daily resorted to collect the current opinions, I found the general report was that she broke down half way on every trip and would probably continue so to do.

“The poor little thing, she does her best ; but she can’t make no way ! she’s got no power in her engines ! Why, I’d sail with a head-wind faster than she can steam !” said the authority in whom I chiefly trusted.

And as our own observation convinced us of the difficulties of getting to Lake Worth within any definite time, and the still greater difficulties in the way of returning from it, there being no regular passenger traffic, we were reluctantly compelled to give up the idea of this trip to the extreme South.


Along the Indian River is to be found land remarkable for richness and fertility.



Nowhere does the orange thrive better, nor attain a finer quality, size, and flavour. Besides the citrus fruits, the more purely tropical products, as the banana, pine-apple, guava, cocoa-nut, date, pomegranate, mango, sugar-apple, and especially the sugar-cane, will grow and flourish most profitably in certain streaks of land on this river, some fine patches of rich hammock being peculiarly adapted to such crops. Sugar-cane promises great success and profit, when a little care and attention is given to its culture.

Tomatoes, peas, pumpkins, and potatoes, are also good "paying" crops, and well suited to the land.

Really, all that the Indian River requires is a few men of energy and wealth to develop its resources. There is a mine



of wealth in the land and climate ; it needs a man, or men, with the faculties of foresight and leading to undertake the task, and capital to carry out the course, of improvement. It needs means of transportation, a railway, steamers. Nature has done all for it that she can. It is man's turn now. The land is only waiting for civilisation to raise the superstructure, ready for which nature has laid so splendid a foundation.


On the Sunday which we spent at Rock Ledge, we heard in the morning that there was to be a funeral that afternoon.—A stranger was to be buried who had come thither for his health, but too late, being far advanced in consumption.

Concerning his death curious whispers




were current. It became known that the night before his death, in his attendant's absence, he had got a knife and stabbed himself over and over again. Some said that he was not mortally wounded—that the wounds inflicted by his failing hand were not dangerous, and that he died of the pulmonary disease; others declared their belief that he might have lingered for days or weeks if it had not been for his suicidal attempt.

It was reported that he was a married man, but that his wife was unaware of his condition—that he received few or no letters from the North, and wrote none—that there was some strange mystery about him—it was even suggested that the name under which he passed was not his own. Some held that he was insane, others that he was



only despondent from suffering ; it was whispered that some terrible trouble had driven him from home and to his death. While all these rumours floated in the air, none knew how much was true nor what was false. The only clear fact was that alone, far from home or friends, this hapless stranger had suffered and died—if not self-slain, yet his end at least hastened by his own desperate hand.

We walked along a sandy path through the wilderness until we came to the spot where another road intersected our path. Here, by the wayside, a few steps from the path, in a little clearance in the tangle of the hammock woods, a long deep hole was dug in the sand. The man who had nursed the dead man, and sat up with him on the last night of his life, had dug the grave and




was standing there, spade in hand, waiting for the coffin.

Whilst waiting he told us a little—only a little, for he was not a man of many words—about that last night—how he had only left his charge for a minute or two, and the poor fellow must have had the knife hidden in his left hand, and been waiting for the moment alone, and seized the opportunity “just while I went down to fill the pitcher.”

Weary with waiting in the burning glare of the afternoon sun, we sought the shelter of the wood, and sat down on a fallen tree in the welcome shade, until we saw the waggon bearing the coffin come lumbering along, a little crowd following and gathering around the grave.

It was curious and impressive in its very lack of all impressive features, its bare and



utter simplicity, this funeral in the wilderness! There stood the waggon, the coffin on the ground beside it. Round it were grouped a score or more of men—indifferent strangers, who knew nothing of, cared nothing for, the dead. The impromptu sexton and two others were busy in the grave, with axe and shovel, calling to each other in tones just decently subdued.

“A few inches more in that corner!”  
“Give it a little more just there!”

A shrill boyish voice proclaiming aloud, “I’ve the best place of all!” drew our attention to an urchin perched up in the barren boughs of a moss-covered oak tree which leant over the grave.

A tame fawn trotted up and sniffed the coffin. A young man clambered up

out of the grave, took off his hat and pulled a prayer-book out of his pocket. The coffin was lowered; and all removed hats and clustered round, as the young minister who had just been busy with his axe in the grave, began to read the service for the Burial of the Dead.

The fawn trotted to the edge of the grave and looked in. The urchin in the oak tree nearly tumbled off his branch in his eagerness to see and hear.

The sun blazed in the brilliant blue sky, not a sound nor a stir broke the deep stillness of the wild woods except the solemn words—

*"I am the Resurrection and the Life saith the Lord.*

*"Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery.*

*"He cometh up and is cut down like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow and never continueth in one stay."*

With decent respect, but with stolid indifference, the men gathered round the open grave, listened and looked on. And there was no one to shed a tear—not one there who had loved the dead! Would ever one come and lay a flower, and breathe a prayer, over this tombless, unconsecrated grave in the wilderness?

What an end was this! We wondered what had been the course of the life that ended here. Did ever in his life a foreshadowing creep coldly over him of the death he was to die? Were there none who loved him, that he had died alone, a self-sought death! solitary as the wounded deer that crawls away into

the brush to breathe its last! Kindly people were round him during his last hours, it is true, but strangers all.

*"We therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth! ashes to ashes! dust to dust!"*

We thought of the wife who knew not that this very hour the clods were falling with a sickening thud upon her husband's coffin. And by his grave, amongst all these stranger men, only two women stood—two women who had never seen the dead man and did not know his name!

And thinking of the far-off wife, who dwelt in ignorance still of her widowhood—some dim vague sentiment moved us to feel glad that we came; it seemed somehow as if this sad end would have been sadder still if the poor, lonely, unmourned dead had

been laid in his last home without one woman near!

*“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours!”*

The earth had been shovelled in on the coffin: the amateur sextons wiped their brows, and put on their hats with an air of relief; and we turned away and left him there. After all it mattered not to the poor clay—the shell of the flown, freed soul—that we left him there alone, none lingering, none wiping away a tear, nor turning back a grieving glance, to the grave no loving hand would tend.

## CHAPTER XI.

Southward Ho !—Tampa—A Day's Drive through the Flatwoods—Cracker Homes—Tarpon Springs—The Bayous—Fine Fish—Boating.

ON a bright warm morning in early March we start on a visit to the Gulf Coast, taking the morning mail-train to Tampa, the present terminus of the South Florida Railroad. The journey—of about four hours—from Maitland to Tampa, is through an interesting section of country which gives every evidence of being swiftly and successfully “settled up.” We pass by the fair pine woods, the pretty villa

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residences, and splendid "Seminole Hotel" of Winter Park—then through the bustling, crowded depot of busy Orlando; and about eighteen miles further on we come to Orlando's rising rival city, Kissimee, lying low on the shores of the great Lake Tohopekaliga—about the meaning of which Indian name there is an open discussion, some holding that its translation is "The Sleeping Tiger," others that it means "The Cry of the Blackbird."

We pass through pine land good and bad, high and low, by lakes large and small—too numerous to name—through tangles of oak and moss and magnolia, and here and there through "bay-lands" and swamp; but all along the line we come upon promising signs of progress—neat wooden cottages, pretty homes, growing settlements that

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betoken a speedy development into thriving towns; the whole aspect of the country, peaceful and prosperous, seems to breathe promise of a successful future to the settlers there; and, moreover—what is not wholly unimportant to the traveller—we pass through this land of promise in cars as comfortable, and along a road as smooth, as any in the North.


In the zenith of a glowing afternoon we arrive at Tampa—a loosely-scattered, tropical-looking town, its white houses and white fences contrasting brightly with the vivid blue sky; the roads are wide and sandy; the great oak trees heavily veiled in moss, and here we find the oranges still hanging in lavish golden glory in the groves. We put up at the pretty little “Orange-Grove Hotel” where

we find first-class accommodation, a capital table, and, last but not least, assiduous attention and a cordial welcome. Here we are joined by Governor Safford, the President of the "Lake Butler Villa Company," the chief organiser and moving-spirit of the rising town of "Tarpon Springs," whither the next morning he drives us; he has most kindly brought his own easy spring-waggon and his favourite "team" so that we make the twenty-five miles journey in all comfort.

The drive really does not seem long, although it is through an unbroken monotony of flatwoods—until within a short distance of Tarpon Springs. See a few hundred yards of the Florida flatwoods, and you have seen them all! Here they stretch for miles on miles—the same unvarying

prospect ; close ranks on ranks of weedy pine trees that look as if they had outgrown their strength—coarse grass and lank sparse scrub—level low-lying land wherein every hollow is brimmed with water, and in every pool and creek the water-loving cypresses cluster thickly, their wide-spreading roots reaching out to drink up the liquid that is their life, the moss hanging heavily on their bare branches, which are as yet scarcely breaking into leaf.

This is poor land, as we do not need to be told ; we can see for ourselves that these slim lank pines spring from no rich soil. It needs draining before it can be made of any worth for purposes of cultivation, being partly under water in the rainy season ; but the grass affords pasturage for cattle—such pasturage as it is, and such



cattle as they are ! gaunt beasts, all bones and horns and tail ! No wonder the Florida beef is tough, and the Florida cow yields a pint or two of milk and thinks she has done well. Northern cattle, imported and stall-fed, of course conduct themselves better. Besides these forlorn-looking cattle, straying about the woods in a lost and depressed manner, we come across many pigs—lean, lank, wiry pigs, unlike indeed to our own plump dairy-fed porkers—Florida pigs, all long legs and immense snouts, with little promise of bacon on their gaunt ribs.

Every now and then, in this drive through the flat woods, we come upon a burnt and blackened patch ; sometimes the fire is still smouldering in the scrub, and creeping sleepily among the roots of the pine trees, making a pleasant, pungent

odour where it has burnt through to the sap.

“They burn off the old grass,” the Governor tells us, “that the new crop may spring up fresh for the cattle to feed on; but” he adds, “it is wrong to do it, for this burning spoils the land.” By the way, I must add to this view of the scrub-burning the comment upon it which I heard a day or two afterwards made by an old coloured man—  
“Spoil de land? No ma’am, dat it don’t do! Can’t spoil dis land—can’t spoil it nohow, cause it’s jes’ so bad dar ain’t nothin’ couldn’ make it worse.”


The signs of settlement, except for the melancholy-looking kine and the rooting “cracker” pigs, are few and far between as yet. For miles and miles we drive through a monotonous level expanse of

unbroken wilderness, of pine and cypress, cypress and pine ! but now and again we come upon a "cracker" house, a roughly-built cottage, with chinks gaping between the planks, and windowless walls, and a general air of squalor. From the outside one may make a shrewd guess at the interior, yet if there is "peace to be found in the world" it is quite probably to be found in the rough, hardy, careless, hand-to-mouth life of the cracker home, where no ambition enters at the door to drive contentment out of the window.

Once we pass by a large tract of land, fenced in and covered with dead pine-trees standing erect, white and bare, barked and branchless, like skeletons. The Governor directs our attention to this as an example of "cracker shiftlessness."


They have killed these trees by "girdling" them deeply, cutting a ring round the trunk right through bark and sap; this done, the trees wither and die; bark, leaves and twigs fall; the roots, no longer drawing nourishment from the soil, leave it free to afford all its resources for the feeding of vegetables; but still the dead trees are left standing by the score and the hundred, interfering with ploughing, disfiguring the land, and generally in the way. We could quite realise this; but remembering that labour is dear here, and summer long, and summer sun torrid, we did not so very much wonder that the cracker grudged the time and trouble necessary to cut down all these ranks of dead trees.

Distinguishable at a glance from the




“cracker” cottage is the home of the Northern settler, well-built, neat and clean, with its little porch and piazza, glass windows, and—mutely eloquent evidence of civilisation!—curtains at the said windows. We stopped at one of these houses for a glass of water; and found the interior just what we had expected from the promise of the outside that it would be, with its bedroom furnished with patchwork quilt and lace curtains, its trim, neat parlour, its cretonne-covered furniture, sewing-machine, desk, harmonium, framed chromos and photographs on the walls, books—“keepsakes,” albums, and selections from popular poets—on the table, and shelves decorated with bits of fancy-work, the achievement of the daughters of the house.

Now and then we come upon signs of



cultivation, albeit few and far between—here a young orange-grove, there a piece of land planted out with sugar-cane, which at this season is only peeping above the ground in tiny slips. Presently as the miles glide away, the character of the landscape begins to alter; the pine trees grow larger and finer, the scrub richer, the road leads over rolling and rising ground until we really feel we can conscientiously apply the term “hilly” to it—a welcome change from the dead level of the flatwoods!

At last we arrive at the high rising bluffs which conceal Lake Butler from our sight on the one side, while on the other the undulating land sweeps in bold curves down to the “Salt Lake,” a tidal basin fed from the Gulf of Mexico. Then a turn of the road brings us into Tarpon Avenue, a fine




broad road—wide as the way to perdition, and a good deal longer than that way proves in many cases! It is as yet not built up; on either side of it stretch the woods of pine and oak, turkey-oak, and the familiar russet-hued “black-jack;” but these woods are no longer the wilderness; they are marked off at regular intervals with slips of white board into “lots,” and “streets” to be!

The avenue leads directly into Tarpon Springs—is in fact its main street, and as we near the town, we come upon pretty little white tents pitched among the trees near the wayside. These tents are rather a feature of Tarpon Springs; and in them many families are enjoying a gipsying season, close enough to civilised comforts to be enjoyable—some owning, others

merely renting, their temporary canvas homes.

Tarpon Springs is a wonderful three-years child, it is hard to realise how this bright flourishing little town can have sprung up in so short a time, where only three years before was "forest primæval!" We have seen no prettier nor more promising young settlement in all Florida—and certainly none more trim and neat. It is a bright, pure and wholesome-looking place, with its white fences, its broad, smooth sidewalks, its generally well-finished and cleanly air.

It has three or four stores, three hotels, saw-mills, a blacksmith's shop, a town-hall and of course a schoolhouse—what American settlement can be found without its school? Often, when passing a group




of only three or four small frame cottages—a solitary spot of cultivation in the wilderness—we have noticed a little shed, neat and clean, and with “School House” written on a card pinned upon its door.

The “Tarpon Springs Hotel” is a handsome building, and in every way most comfortably appointed. In the evening walking on the broad piazzas which surround the hotel, and looking out upon the twinkling lights of the town, the outlines of the houses in lamp- and star-light, it is like a dream to reflect that all this has risen where there was but untrodden wilderness three short years back.

The situation of the town is as nearly perfection as we can hope to find on this earth of ours. About a mile and a half to


the west lies the Gulf of Mexico, whose waters run in winding creeks and inlets—called *bayous*—to the wharf of Tarpon Springs, within a stone's throw from the hotel. At the wharf are always to be found sailing and rowing boats in plenty; and every day the steamer *Mary Disston* built expressly to navigate these shallow *bayous*, and plying between the Springs and the Gulf, anchors there. Here is the "spring-house," a pretty, fanciful building, built over one of the springs of natural mineral water claimed to be a panacea for many of the "ills that flesh is heir to." The main avenue leads from this *bayou* straight through the town and on to Lake Butler—a beautiful sheet of water six miles long, whose pine-covered shores afford many picturesque and convenient sites for



building, and will doubtless within a few years be dotted with delightful winter homes.

Sportsmen find excellent shooting and fishing here. Quail, duck, snipe, and other game abounds, so that our table is always well supplied; and we miss our fresh milk and roast mutton the less. Game, poultry, venison, and such delicacies as "ragout of racoon," and "squirrel-pie," go far to compensate us for the lack of Northern meats, which, owing to the absence of railroad transportation, are not yet to be obtained at Tarpon Springs; but even Florida beef, when cooked as admirably as we find it here, turns out a tasty and tempting dish.

The lakes and the *bayous*, the Gulf and the Anclote River, offer an almost endless variety of salt and fresh water fish. The great Tarpon fish, from which the place




takes its name, often come up into the shallow bayous ; they have been taken here weighing as heavy as 300 pounds ; this is unusual, but 100 pounds and 150 pounds are no uncommon weight. The Tarpon is a beautiful, as well as a substantial, fish, with its pearly, silvery coat of mail—the scales as large as the palm of my hand, and as hard as horn.

On the islands which are dotted about the mouth of the Anclote River and where the bayous broaden out into the Gulf, curious and beautiful shells and many marine curiosities, sea-cows, sea-horses, sand-crabs, sea-urchins, &c., are to be had for the picking up ; and shell-gathering excursions and pleasure parties to these interesting islands are made up frequently.

The great sponge fisheries are within a

very few miles, and oyster-beds run up the bayous close to the town—as I especially remember, because, on the very first boating excursion we took there, we “grounded” upon an oyster-bed and broke off our rudder. On these broad, smooth bayous which wind and double, north and south and east and west, for three miles, until they reach the Gulf, and the Islands and Anclote Keys, there is the best of boating to be had.

A child can row its little skiff with safety in these calm, clear waters, which are for the most part so shallow that it seems as if we could just dip a hand over the side of the boat and pick up handfuls of the shining pebbles or golden sands.



## CHAPTER XII.

The Anclote River—The Alligator-Hunters—Foiled!—An Ideal Picnic—Danger in the Woods!—Growth on the Gulf Coast—Tremont Springs—Homewards.


THANKS to Governor Safford's kindness we saw Tarpon Springs in its most favourable aspect, enjoying all the beautiful land and water excursions around it.

One characteristic Gulf Coast morning—a day that would have looked dull elsewhere—a grey, steaming, sultry, sunless morning, warm and balmy without the blinding glare of the tropical sun—we set off on a picnic trip up the Anclote River,

in little row-boats pulled by stalwart coloured boatmen.

At first the broad river flows through level pine-lands; then it narrows and bends into graceful curves, serpentineing in and out between banks, which here and there rise into bluffs. The woodland thickens to forest; the landscape becomes more and more tropical as the palmetto grows more and more luxuriant; the stream curls and twists until it seems to be tying itself into knots and untying itself again.

Our boats glide on through a dense jungle-growth of cedar and palm and pine, gum and cypress, hickory and all kinds of oak, blossoming vines and magnolia trees not yet in bloom—the silver-white boughs of the cypress and the gnarled and twisted



limbs of the oak all wreathed with tropical moss—the fresh and vivid green of the maple, and the tender delicate tints of the young sapling pines, gleaming fair among the deeper hues of the forest, where the mature pines lift high their graceful heads, and the stately, crowned palmettoes seem somehow to detach themselves and stand aloof in their majesty from their woodland brethren.

In the mirror-like depths of the river the landscape lives again; on its still grey surface the little floating waifs of leaf and twig lie motionless in mid-stream. Can there be a current at all in these glassy waters, whereon no tiny floating leaflet stirs?

Our sturdy boatmen pull on steadily, and we presently overtake a boat full of sportsmen from our hotel, on alligator-shooting

bent; they are all in a simple and *déagé* costume, vestless, coatless, free and easy and happy; one is standing up in the bow, tall and lithe, in broad hat and blue shirt, huge hunting-knife in belt and gun in hand.

On a bank some little distance ahead of us lies a log about ten feet long—it looks at first only like a log; but as we draw nearer, and the short-sighted ones put up their glasses, we distinguish cold slits of eyes, and jaws


“Closed in the hideous semblance of a smile!”

The sportsmen call back to us in a thrilling whisper, to “Hush, keep quiet! don’t come on!” We obey; our boatmen rest on their oars; we watch the sportsmen’s boat glide slowly nearer—nearer; the blue-shirted marksman looks keenly along

the line of his levelled gun ; but just at the moment that he fires, the lazy-looking log slips, slides—there is a splash and an eddy, and the alligator's tail gives a tantalising flip above the water as he goes down !

Near the spot where he vanishes there is a picturesque little creek ; and after a brief, subdued, but animated discussion, the sportsmen's boat glides into the sheltering shades of the creek ; and we leave them there, drawn up in ambush by the bank, lying in wait for the ten-foot alligator, should he unwarily pop up his scaly nose again.

A little breeze rises, not enough to ruffle the still glassy surface of the water, but fresh enough to fan us pleasantly, in the sultry sunless afternoon heat, as we push on through the luxuriant wilderness that grows ever thicker, richer, and wilder, and



thread the serpentine coils of the winding river, between banks that seem every now and then about to close us in, till we find a little opening in the dense tangle of the hammock, and slip round a sharp angle into a fresh curl of the stream.

Two or three times we come upon a seeming log lying on the low bank—a log which, as our boats draw near, turns, slips, and disappears below the water.

At last we arrive at a spot which seems to us the very perfection of a place for landing and luncheon. We land accordingly, and spread our picnic cloth under a huge palmetto tree, while all around us the flowering wreaths of the blackberry-vine trail and cling on the bushes, and clusters of pale, scentless violets, and little yellow and white and purple flowerets are scattered

along the ground among the grass and brushwood.

We look round carefully to assure ourselves there is no "poison-ivy" near; we are warned to be very wary in our wanderings in the wild woods, as the mere contact with this plant is, with some constitutions, sufficient to poison the system. One acquaintance of ours was seriously ill—confined to his bed for many months—from the mere brushing against poison-ivy on his way through the woods.

In a spot secure from this unpleasant neighbour, in the shade of the great palmetto, whose canopy of huge, fan-like leaves spreads high, high above our heads, we unpack the hamper of delicacies which the thoughtful care of our kind hostess has provided, and sit down to the feast, as

merry and happy a party as ever gathered under the shade of palm or pine!

Our tempting cakes and sandwiches, with, of course, a choice selection of pies—when was an American luncheon complete without pies?—are washed down by delicious cool draughts of Northern cider, and “Florida Grape Fruit Juice,” as it is labelled, which turns out to be a most delicious wine, made from the grape-fruit, a wine very like Moselle, but with a peculiar and pleasant flavour all its own.


Never was a picnic hour more gaily and harmoniously spent than this in the palmetto woods, in the congenial society of Governor Safford and his family; nor has a shower of rain, which splashes down with tropical suddenness, and ceases as

suddenly as it fell, the least power to damp our spirits.

When in the evening somebody sings that popular one of the "old songs" which describes the delights of June upon the Danube, we felt inclined to join in chorus with a slightly altered version :

"Never, never  
Can we forget that day in March,  
Upon the Anclothe River!"

At the mouth of this river, a promising little settlement is growing up, and here again we find our countrymen well to the fore—where in Florida indeed do we not find them? We have reason to feel proud of the specimens to whom we are introduced here—fine types of young Englishmen, building up for themselves comfortable homes, one "running" a lumber-mill,



another cultivating an orange-grove, all hopeful, prosperous, not forgetting the old land, but working with a will in the new.

The Gulf Coast is developing rapidly, under the healthy and active influence of the energetic men who are taking it in hand, and who do not allow the grass to grow under their feet.

Land of all classes and qualities may be had here, from the all but worthless "flat woods" to the finest "high pine" and richest "hammock." In, and immediately around, Tarpon Springs itself, there is chiefly pine-land; but within a few miles rich hammock abounds—witness the Anclote River!

About nine miles north of Tarpon, near the mouth of the "Cootie River," the settle-

ment of Tremont Springs is in process of formation, and, though in a very early stage as yet, promises well, on account of the fine quality of the land there, which for a mile or two back from the coast is a rich and fertile loam, wherein both the pine and the palmetto flourish abundantly. Beyond this, a couple of miles inland, the pine-lands pure and simple, without admixture of palmetto, recommence—the difference being plainly perceptible at a glance between the richer and darker soil producing the palmetto, and the light sand of that favourable only to the pine. This latter nevertheless is very good orange-land, but for vegetables and other tropical fruits the palmetto land is by far the most valuable.

It is with real regret that we turn our

backs upon Tarpon Springs, and bid—I trust not “*adieu*” but “*au revoir!*”—to the good friends whose kindness and hospitality have made our visit there so happy.

It will not be long, we trust, before the railway will reach Tarpon Springs, and “open up” Tremont and all that section of the Gulf Coast. But at present the choice of routes lies between steamer and waggon.

The steamer *Governor Safford* runs twice a week from Tarpon Springs to Cedar Keys and Tampa, making a pleasant trip—for those happy travellers who are “good sailors”—on the Gulf of Mexico ; but we prefer to return as we came, by land—by the twenty-five miles drive through the flatwoods.

On our return journey we find these low-lying lands drowned from the recent rains, every shallow dip and hollow filled up with water, which the cypresses seem to be thirstily and rejoicingly drinking up. The wild-flowers are coming into blossom, the white bells of the *paupa* being especially abundant in the grasses all along the road.

Arrived in Tampa, we find that, during the ten days which have elapsed since we passed through it on our way to Tarpon, the orange-trees have burst into bloom, and their rich fragrance pervades the whole atmosphere. Some of the trees are still studded with the red-gold globes of un-fallen fruit; others are laden with the snowy blossoms; and to breathe the balmy air of the groves is like inhaling the fragrance of a huge bridal bouquet.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Spring's Delights—The Land of Flowers—The Lakes—  
The Creeks—Through the "Dismal Swamp"—A few  
Aboriginal Polysyllables.

WE are back at Lake Maitland in the loveliest season of the year, when this fair land seems to be growing fairer day by day! All earth smiles under the sunny kisses of the ripening spring—the golden Southern spring, whose breath has all the glowing warmth of summer.

The flowers are breaking into bloom on land and lake; the white blackberry blossoms gleam pale and sweet among

the trees; the great scented stars of the yellow jasmine cluster in golden wreaths on the trellis-work of porch and piazza; the brilliant phlox "blossoms purple and red" in grove and garden; the wild olive and orchids grow low in the woods; the bushes on the banks of the lake are studded with delicate, pink and white, waxen, heath-like bells; among the rushes the purple flags flaunt their royal colouring, and yellow water-lilies open their cups among their broad plate-like leaves on the water—while over all, from shore to shore, floats the bridal fragrance of the orange blossoms.

All day the mocking birds fill the air with music; at sunset the whip-poor-will trills over and over again his monotonous cry; then the bell-frogs begin their nightly concert. Sometimes when we are driving

home late at night, we hear in the darkness the alligator's bark-like croak mingling with the chirrup of the frogs. Through all the golden and azure mornings, and the burning noons, and the balmy evenings, we spend our time out in the open air ; we bask and revel in the beauty and the light of sun and stars and moon—such moonlight!—all the landscape washed in a white glory that seems to turn the night to dawn ! a pearly silver radiance, like the cool pure wave of light that surges up over the eastern horizon and floods the sky before the sun rises into sight.

We row on the lakes ; we drive through the woods ; we lounge on the piazzas ; when the sun is too strong on the south piazza, we move round to the east. In this *dolce-far-niente* life the spring days glide by like a dream ! The lakes are an

inexhaustible source of delight. Every curve and creek reveals new beauties. The leaves are coming out on the cypress trees that grow thickly along the shores, and stand like outposts in the shallow water, their light drifting draperies of moss veiling the entrance to many a lovely creek, and screening off many a delicious "cosy nook," where we find sweet shade from the noon-day sun.

On these tall cypresses, late so bare and weird and melancholy looking, which stood up like wintry white skeletons, hung with funereal falls of moss, the leafage is unfolding in the tenderest, freshest, brightest shades of green—breaking softly through those grizzled hoary streamers.

Like a wreath on grey hair—like buds of youth and hope and promise beneath a funeral veil—these fair young leaves mingle

with the heavy falls of moss. There is something strangely picturesque and suggestive in the effect of this sweet spring foliage peeping among those mourning wreaths of cold and death-like grey, against the vivid cloudless blue of the Southern sky.

We have a choice of lakes for our resort—the splendid Lake Maitland, and a little further off, lying beyond it, the chain of Lakes Osceola, Virginia, and Mizell—while closer at hand, at the bottom of our garden, are our own two pretty little lakes, connected by a narrow creek through which we can punt our boat. The smaller—little Lake Jessie, or as some of our party call it “Silver Lake”—is a little gem, a deep, still, oval pool, clear as glass, with shifting hues of sapphire and emerald reflecting the changing skies and fringing woods.

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But all these lakes are beautiful—

“I know not which is fairer—no, not I!”

but perhaps give the palm to Lake Maitland, with its long bold sweeps of shore line, its green islands, and cypress-shaded creeks.

Some of the company of pleasure, health, or fortune seekers gathered here, view these fair waters æsthetically, others piscatorially.

Our artists, with sketch-block and paint-box, seek the most picturesque points of the shore—the best view of the islands. Our fishermen and women resort to the corners where they know the bass and perch do congregate—the shallow pools where tiny “horny heads” and “shiners,” to be used as “bait,” abound; and they appreciate the sunset hour—the divinest of all the exquisite shining day!—chiefly as the time when the fish “bite” best.


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Nimrod junior, daily sallying forth with full accoutrement of gun, net, knife, rod, and bait-can, enjoys life to his heart's content. He supplies our table with our unfailing fish ; he occasionally brings home under his arm a turtle as big as a bonnet-box, to be made into soup ; he lands a huge gar-pike with formidable teeth, the terror of the waters—whose hideous head he preserves as a most valued trophy.

In the intervals of fishing he has his gun handy, and sometimes gets a shot at an alligator, which ill-natured saurian is generally disobliging enough to sink when wounded, and thus snatch from the grasp of the slayer the triumph of bearing home the slain ! He also picks off every bird that crosses his path—blue birds, cardinal birds, yellow woodpeckers, blue jays, rice birds, with

their beautiful black velvety plumage, and brilliant flame-touched wings — all the pretty, harmless “happy living things!” the fluttering, singing flowers of the woods — nothing comes amiss to his merciless aim! and he employs all his spare time in skinning and stuffing his spoils. We generally come home from our boating excursions with a curiously mixed cargo—fish, birds, reptiles, flowers, shooting and fishing tackle; and a novel or two to read in the intervals of sport.

One day we row, or rather pole, our little boat up Howell's Creek, which runs from Lake Maitland to Lake Howell, most of its course winding too tortuously to allow of rowing. This wild and sequestered creek—little known or noticed as yet—will bear




comparison with even the romantic and beautiful Ocklawaha or the picturesque Anclote River. We follow its windings through the wild luxuriance of the woods, pushing our way among purple flags and flowering rushes, through the spreading carpet of broad, flat lily leaves, nestling among which their white or golden cup-like blossoms lie, while every turn of the bending creek delights our eyes with some fresh picture of the forest tangle, of stately trees and trailing vines, and crowded bush, in which every tone and semi-tone of green is blended, from the tenderest sapling tints to the deep inlets of shade in the dense recesses of the woods.

Here a great tree has fallen with its branches on the opposite shore, forming a natural arch across the stream—an arch of course all festooned with wreaths of the

ubiquitous tropical moss—framing in a rugged setting the perfect picture of the forest and stream and sky beyond.

Another day we pole up the creek connecting Lake Maitland with Lakes Osceola and Virginia, on the banks of which latter is situated the splendid Seminole Hotel. The Osceola Creek is much narrower, and even more tortuous, than Howell's Creek. Plunging into its mazes, it seems as if we were running our little skiff ashore right into the heart of the hammock. However, the woods seem to open before us as we push our way—the opening is not very wide certainly, sometimes only just wide enough to permit us to pass. At about every boat's length we have to turn, as best we can,



round an angle more or less acute, grazing along the bank as we turn. All the while the current is rushing against us and doing its best to bear us backwards, while we struggle with might and main to frustrate its endeavours ; the trees interlacing above our heads shut out the sunlight, and their lower branches and bushes beset our path with briary obstacles.


This experience, as far as its external aspect goes, reminds us of that of the unfortunate lover who pursued the lost lady of his heart to the "Dismal Swamp," whereon,

"All night long by the firefly lamp,  
She paddled her light canoe."

"Away to the '*Dismal Swamp*' he speeds—  
His path was rugged and sore !  
Through tangled juniper, beds of weeds,  
Through many a fen where the serpent feeds,  
And man never trod before !"

I doubt if his path could be rugged or more tangled than ours, as we push our way up the narrow, twisting and turning stream, through the wild thicket that seems to grow denser and denser, while trailing vines entwine us in an affectionate embrace; and briars sharp as needles tangle our hair and scratch our faces; and the branches seem to stretch out expressly at the right height to hit us on the head.

The creek is full of picturesque beauty, but I doubt if any one of our trio had any eyes left for the beautiful during the unceasing struggle for the safety of our hats and heads, as the boat, vigorously punted, shot along beneath the overhanging boughs, which more than once not only swept off our headgear, but rolled us all over, one after another, prostrate in the bottom of the



boat. Nothing is more beautiful in its own style than the wild luxuriance of this "hammock" land; but it is impossible to appreciate the charms of Nature while occupied in rescuing a hat stricken off into the water—or scrambling up breathlessly from a fall inflicted by a vigorous blow from an aggressive low-growing branch—or dashing aside, with hands already scored with scratches, a briar that threatens to "scratch out both our eyes!"

It was carried by our unanimous vote of three that never, never would we "pole" up the Winter Park Creek again! And now it is evident that we never shall have the chance, for I see in a recent paper that this creek is to be "cleared," and widened, and fitted for the passage of a steam-launch for next season. And, moreover, our happy

little trio—whose hilarity and high spirits neither leaking boat nor rending briar, neither wet feet nor scratched faces, nor even mosquito bites ! could mar—are scattered far and wide ! and “Echo ” answers “ When ? ”—to the question, “ When shall we three meet again ? ”—we three who drifted and dreamed our days away on those summer lakes—and never thought then of the waking !

Why, I wonder, by the way, do people insist on christening these Florida lakes after their wives and sweethearts ? Lake Jessie—Lake Catherine—Lake Cecilia—even Lake *Sue* ! O faithful lover of Sue ! could you not at least have made it *Susanna* ? Are all the euphonious aboriginal Indian names exhausted, from Anathaliga to Withlacoochee and Yallaha ?

I do not know whether K. Munroes "Florida Madrigal" has often been quoted before; but even if it has, I will risk quoting it again, as it brings into rhyme a choice selection of these aboriginal Floridian names—

"We'll sail up the Pithlchestcoatee,  
Seek hammocks on fair Waccassassa,  
Ascend to its head Chattahoochee,  
Land on Sanibel, off Punta Rassa!  
Float swiftly down Caloosahatchee,  
Escaping from Okeechobee,  
To the land of Itsopogayoxee,  
And prairies of salt Manatee,  
Dream dreams on Tohopekaliga,  
Sing songs upon old Suwannee,  
Skim the surface of Woyohokalpa,  
Tuskawilla, and Okeehumkee!  
Wakulla, Wekiva, Homosassa,  
Cheshowiska and Ocklawaha,  
The famous Lake Ichebucksassa,  
And fair Apalachicola!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

A Frontier Town—Pomegranate and Magnolia—The Singing-Time of the Mosquito—Seasonable Weather—Our Daily Alligator—More Orange-Groves ; the last of them ! —Fortunate Narcoossee—Good-bye to Florida—A Farewell Word !

ORLANDO, the county seat of Orange County, is a thriving, stirring, “live” town, full of business and movement, in the active stage of development. Only a few years ago it was little more than a centre and gathering-place for the cattle-men whose herds grazed on such pasturage as they could get in the South Florida woods. In 1880 the railroad was opened ; and from that time the neigh-

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bourhood has "settled up" rapidly, until in 1886 there is a population of 3,000 within the corporate limits of Orlando, wherein, early in 1880, before the advent of steam communication, there were barely a couple of hundred scattered settlers.

Now Orlando has capital shops, several hotels, two banks, two newspapers, livery stables, an opera house, public schools and churches, — for both white and coloured, separately—and, last not least, for the prosperity of the city, its own manufactures. Waggons and carriages, furniture, boots and shoes, orange wine, and other necessities and luxuries of life, are made on the spot instead of being imported from the North—though of course Northern goods can be obtained if preferred. Also there is an ice-factory, which is a blessing to the inhabitants

during the long Florida summer. Orlando is a regular frontier town, all wooden houses of every conceivable style, size, and colour —its streets all bustle and stir and business —its shops much better inside than one would anticipate from their exteriors, which is a satisfactory discovery, as it is *the* “shopping” town for many a mile around.

In April we move from Lake Maitland to the West End Hotel, about half a mile out of the city of Orlando. It is a large and handsome new hotel, comfortably and elegantly furnished; and, most important to our enjoyment, there is a lake hard by, and on it we find a boat; the lake, “Concord” by name, is a little further from the hotel than we could have wished; but the way to it is a pretty walk through fields ablaze with wild flowers.

The wild sorrel is just in the fulness of its rose-red bloom, and spreads like a coral-coloured carpet over field and grove. In the gardens the pomegranates are opening their lovely bells of matchless scarlet; the rose trees are one mass of pink and white and crimson bloom; and the magnolia—*grandiflora*—has unfolded its immense white cups, smooth as satin and pure as snow, and fills the air with its rich fragrance, that is almost too potent for many tastes.

The immediate surroundings of Orlando are not as picturesque as those of Maitland; but the spring sunshine sheds a beauty over all the land, even over the meagre, lean, and hungry-looking pine-trees and sparse scrub herbage of the West-end suburbs of Orlando—a little beyond which, however, the woods grow richer and thicker again.

The time of the singing of birds has come ! and also, alas ! the time of the stinging of the mosquito, who roameth abroad by night. In the dead, deep, silent hours of the midnight he is by our pillow, and his little soft, low song, piercing clear and delicate through the stillness, effectually "murders sleep." Even in the tender twilight, as we sit out on the piazzas, deeming ourselves safe from the enemy as yet, we hear his dulcet whisper announcing that his time has come !


*Siz-z-z-z* sings the little demon in our ears ; we slap at him viciously, but almost invariably too late ; he is gone, flitting off like a tiny ghost, with a little triumphant *whizz* ! The daily morning greeting is "How are your bites to-day?" the comparison of the quantity and quality of the said bites is an

ever fruitful topic of interest ; I announce proudly one day the sum-total of fifty-four on one arm, only to have my record ignominiously beaten by young Nimrod's proclamation that *he* has "Sixty-two !"

In the evenings we sit sociably on the piazza, in the broad, day-bright moonlight, with a bottle of ammonia, which is passed round from one to the other like a loving-cup, and applied constantly to our afflicted hands and ears and noses and eyes—our tormentor seems to take a particular delight in closing up the latter organs by means of well-directed bites on the lids, while as regards the hand, he has apparently intelligence enough to know that a swelled and smarting index-finger is peculiarly inconvenient and annoying to his human enemies, and he directs his attentions accordingly.

The weather also is a trial to us. They say it is not the rainy season ; but nevertheless day after day down comes the rain—in a steady, pelting, pitiless downpour, rattling like a cannonade upon the roof. This goes on with very brief intervals for a week, at the end of which the sun succeeds in vanquishing the storm-clouds and bursts out in a sky of dazzling, glaring blue, with a brazen blaze that is almost as effective as the rain in keeping us indoors from morning till twilight, while the thermometer “in the shade” dances cheerily up in the nineties.

But still and ever, with “Mark Tapley-an” spirits, we manage to enjoy life. The piazzas round the West End Hotel are broad and fine, and shade us from the sun as they shelter us from the rain ; and with pleasant



society, singing the "old songs" which are not "too dear" to be sung, and joking the old familiar jokes, which somehow never pall, but grow dearer and dearer by repetition—the days slip smoothly and pleasantly away.

The Nimrod family especially enjoy themselves; they have found a shop in Orlando where young alligators may be purchased very cheap; and it seems to me that their chief occupation in life is walking into Orlando to purchase their daily alligator. Anyhow, the alligators accumulate until there are nine of them, "All alive oh! alive!" When any mishap occurs to one of them—as for instance, when one is bitten clean in half by his elder brother—his owners waste no time in mourning, but walk off to the little "general variety-store"

in the town to buy another. These curious pets live in basins of water by day, and are put to bed in cigar-boxes on a couch of moss at night. One of them, a tiny fellow, "Little Billy" by name, is frequently carried about on his mistress's shoulder, where he looks like a brooch or pin, cunningly devised in alligator-form, until he opens or closes his cold, snaky slits of eyes.


We enjoy many charming drives about Orlando during the late afternoon hours when the sun is not too strong. Fine orange groves abound in this neighbourhood, and are held at high prices—a thousand dollars an acre being asked for good and well situated groves, not yet in full bearing, but expected to produce a good crop next

season. We also see a great deal of excellent wild pine-land, the height and girth of the trees bearing witness to the richness of the soil.

We find it interesting to watch the land in the various and successive stages of cultivation. We have ample opportunities for inspecting it in all stages, from its earliest one of untouched wild woods to the final goal of a full-bearing grove. Here are the close ranks of wild pines untouched by man. There is the first step towards cultivation—a stretch of blackened ground and burnt and cindery scrub, with smouldering fires and fallen trees. Next, we inspect the beginning of a grove, set out by a young Englishman just starting in life. He has begun well, cleared his land thoroughly of stumps, set it out neatly in seedlings, tiny baby

seedlings, just out of the "nursery," and piled up the rubbish, the old grass and weeds, and half-burnt scrub, in heaps, one beside each seedling, that they may fertilise the ground in their decay. Then we arrive at the final stage and crowning glory of these lands—a splendid grove of glossy, rich-foliaged orange trees; the grove was sold lately for five thousand pounds—and its crop fetched nine hundred pounds last season. But *this* season, of course, there is no crop to sell, owing to the frost. Some fields around here are set out in sugar-cane, which they hope will do well, others in strawberries and tomatoes.

A lady from Narcoossee—a rising settlement on East Tohopekaliga Lake, reports that there they escaped with little or no damage from the frost that elsewhere was so fatal; many of their oranges and all the



trees passing uninjured through the ordeal, and the groves promising a good crop in the coming season. She gave us some specimens of the growing fruit from her grove—little dark green baby oranges, now—in late April—about the size of a large filbert, formed and grown of course since the January frosts. She also showed us a basketful of her garden products—green peas and green oats. They had their own new potatoes and green peas on New Year's Day, and were now gathering this second crop of vegetables.

On the whole it is clear that wonderfully little damage has been done to the progress and prospects of the State by the almost unprecedented severity of this season.

We see with regret the time draw near when we must take our leave of this sunny Southern clime which some one—I know

not who—has unkindly, if not untruly,  
described as

“The land of the 'possum, mosquito, and jigger,  
Where the rattlesnake crawls in the burning hot  
sand,  
And the red-bug he bites both the white man and  
nigger!”

I don't know about the nigger; but I can  
answer for it from sad experience that he  
bites the white man—and woman too!

Even the nightly whirr and sting of the  
mosquito, the plague of flies that swarm by  
the hundred and thousand, especially at meal  
times, and seek a suicidal end in our milk,  
and soup and tea and coffee—they are per-  
fectly impartial as to which they drown in  
—even the gnats and the heat and the  
torrid sun-glare, fail to entirely reconcile us  
to departure from Florida.

But the glowing days of the last of April

hasten by ; the rose-red of the fields of wild-sorrel dims and fades into a dull brick colour ; the gardens blaze brighter and brighter with rich luxuriance of flowers ; and the hour comes when we have to bid a regretful goodbye—the sadder because we know not when we may meet again !—to the kind friends who “ see us off ” at the Orlando depot. Thence the evening train bears us to Sanford, where we take the night boat for Jacksonville.

The splendid steamers of the De Bary-Baya line are luxuriously fitted up, and we get an excellent supper and breakfast on board.

In the evening we go out on deck and watch the effect of the electric light at the vessel's bow on the landscape. The white glare kills the colour of the forest-clad shores ; the blanched woods have a strange,

cold, silvery sheen ; this argent blaze that robs them of their daylight tints lends them an unreal and spectral beauty. So might the shades of dead trees look in a nether world—a sunless world of pale and hueless spectres ! The palmettoes in some strange way seem to stand out separately from their forest-brethren, and loom like tall white imperial ghosts of themselves between the dark river and the dark, moonless sky.

A weird and dream-like vision is this unearthly-looking white world of woods, shining out pale and ghostly between the deep, mysterious shadows of the river and the dim purple distance of heaven ! It is the last picture left “ in our mind’s eye ” of Florida !—that is, of characteristic Florida landscape ; for the next morning in Jacksonville we simply pass straight from


the steamer to the railway station, where the train is smoking which is to bear us on our Northward way.

So now the North lies before us, and the sunny South behind. Goodbye to the land of pine and palmetto ! of fair lakes and desolate swamps ! of alligators and orange-groves ! of the magnolia and the mocking-bird ! of picturesque winding rivers, whose every twist and turn is a matchless curve of beauty !

Goodbye to the land that has enthralled us by the nameless and indescribable charm that is all her own ! fair Florida ! the Land of Promise ! whither the tide sets strong and full now from the overcrowded old lands—whither so many are turning their faces to-day, to seek a future and build up a home.

But let my last words about this sunny

South be—what cannot be said too often in warning to intending immigrants—Florida, with all its fascinations for tourists and sportsmen, its dreamy *dolce-far-niente* life for the convalescent and the pleasure-seeker, is no place for young men without capital, unless they are willing to grasp the nettle of hard work, accept the plain stern fact of possibly, nay, probably, rough daily toil. No indolent and easy life for the pioneer here! he must dig the ground or drive a waggon—groom a horse—bud a tree, or build a fence, just as occasion demands and opportunity presents itself. No sauntering and gathering roses by the way! no *dolce far niente* for the settlers in their early days, when the land has to be cleared—the cottage built—the grove and garden planted out. Strength to toil in the fierce heat of the semi-tropical sun,



courage to face the hardships of frontier life uncomplainingly and cheerfully, patience to *wait*, energy and sanguine spirits to look ahead to the future through the hard struggle of the present—these qualities are imperatively needed by the settler here.

The grove will increase in value year by year; the garden will soon repay the trouble it has cost; the growth of a home will be the reward of labour. But the toil is hard and the day is long! And work, unflinching work, is the only road to success, here as elsewhere, for him who starts in life without the golden key.

THE END.



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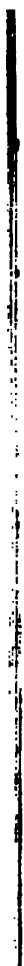
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